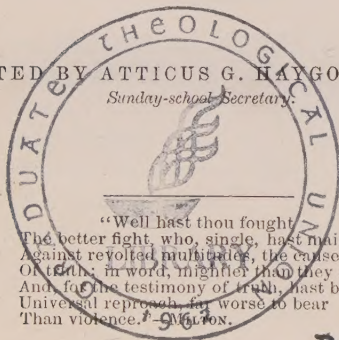


Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2023 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

HEROINES OF EARLY METHODISM.

BY MRS. AND MISS MARTIN.

EDITED BY ATTICUS G. HAYGOOD, D.D.,
Sunday-school Secretary.

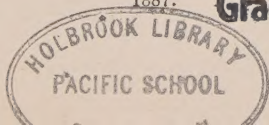


Property of
CBPac

NASHVILLE, TENN.: **Please return to**
SOUTHERN METHODIST PUBLISHING HOUSE.

1887.

Graduate Theologic



Union Library

BX

8493

M37

1887

45956

~~L261.9~~

~~M384~~

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
SUSANNA WESLEY.....	7
MRS. FLETCHER.....	56
MRS. COKE.....	90
LADY HUNTINGDON.....	105
MRS. ROGERS (Hester Ann Roe).....	134
LADY MAXWELL.....	162
GRACE MURRAY.....	196

PREFACE.

IN what is called the heroic age of Methodism there were heroines, as well as heroes. While it behooves us to be well acquainted with both, it is especially desirable that Methodist women of the present day should be more familiar than they are with the exemplary lives of their saintly sisters of the past. These noble Christian women have not been without biographers, but their history in disconnected volumes is not always conveniently at hand, while the quaint style in which it is sometimes written may not address itself to modern taste.

We have deemed it not ill-timed to collect, by means of a brief review of the several biographies of these eminent Christian women (by Clarke, Stevens, Burder, and other standard authors), such history of them as, embodied in one small volume, while eliciting if not satisfying interest, may awaken a desire to know more of those

“whose faith” it were well for us to “follow.”

The favorable reception of this volume may encourage farther research in obtaining similar material for others. We should like to learn more of those devout ladies, Glenorchy, Hope Hastings, Hon. Miss Napier, etc.; and of Jane Hill (sister to Rowland), “who walked with God amid the beautiful scenery of Hawkstone,” and of many others, like-minded, we greatly desire to know more.

To the times we may ascribe it that our heroines of this volume are all of British soil—Methodism being indigenous to that soil. That there were not wanting pens ready to utilize their history, we may ascribe to the inspiration of such a theme, which, we may be allowed to suggest, would in this country, as in that, prove rich and fruitful.

It may be proper to state that two of the sketches in this volume—namely, “Susanna Wesley” and “Lady Maxwell”—have already appeared as original contributions (from the pen of Mrs. M. MARTIN) in *The Southern Quarterly Review*.

Heroines of Early Methodism.

SUSANNA WESLEY.



AS in the early days of Christianity the Church could number among its nursing mothers “honorable women;” so, in the beginning of Methodism, could also be numbered some of this class and sex, such as Ladies Maxwell, Hastings, Huntingdon, Glenorchy, Hope, and others. God provides his own instruments for his own work; and not more truly were Phebe and Priscilla recognized as helpers in

8 HEROINES OF METHODISM.

Christ in the times of the apostles than were those noble ladies, together with Mrs. Wesley, Mrs. Fletcher, Mrs. Coke, and others of like spirit, in the days of Wesley and Whitefield.

Few godly men have lived who could not trace back what was best in them to the influence of a pious mother. How many instances, in proof of this, might we adduce! We will cite but one—one so illustrative that, looking at the character of that one, John Wesley, and reverting to the Rectory of Epworth, where Susanna Wesley was sowing her seed in the morning, we are forced to exclaim: "Who can find a virtuous woman, for her price is far above rubies!" Priceless, indeed, were

her lessons and example to her children.

All of the ten arrived at maturity—became eminently pious. One, the founder and legislator of Methodism, that great religious revival, infusing life and energy into every portion of the Christian Church; and another, “the sweet singer of Israel,” whose sermons in songs, containing a complete digest of theology, have charmed the ear and blessed the hearts of more of Christ’s followers than the numbers of any other bard from David’s time until the present, and whose strains, potent to cheer the living and soothe the dying, are equally so—to awaken the careless and unconverted to their need of Christ, and to estab-

10 HEROINES OF METHODISM.

lish believers in their most holy faith.

By the combined influence of these two noble brothers has the cause of Christ been more advanced than by that of any other human instrumentality from the time of the labors of the apostles until now. Both these men, when their fame had become world-wide, and their moral power swayed the minds of the masses of the old world and those of the teeming population of the new, were then, as ever, ready to acknowledge their obligations to their mother's influence, to seek her counsels, and be guided by her instructions.

We know not if there has ever been written a "Life of Mrs. Wes-

ley," apart from that contained in "The Wesley Family," by Dr. Adam Clarke, and in other histories of Methodism. All writers on Methodism have briefly, or otherwise, sketched the character of one so intimately connected with it; but a full-sized, life-like portraiture of the mother of Methodism is perhaps still a *desideratum*. Her life, in itself, would be eminently didactic, and it is due to the memory of this incomparable woman that the rising generations of Methodism should be fully informed of their obligations to her, whom Stevens, in his "History of Methodism," emphatically styles its "foundress." Eminently instructive as is her life, in the nature of things, it contains little of

12 HEROINES OF METHODISM.

dramatic variety to elicit idle curiosity, or gratify vain excitement. Living so long in one place, bringing up so many sons and daughters, of whom she was not only nurse, but teacher, a minister's helpmeet, with a very limited income, little time or opportunity had she for courting notoriety, by seeing or being seen, abroad. Her most glorious celebrity, like that of the mother of our Lord—with deepest reverence be it spoken—is that she gave birth to a son, and “such a son, as all men hailed her happy.” And yet this “keeper at home,” this domestic, retiring woman, in the absence of her husband, and, at first, even before obtaining, for want of opportunity, his unqualified ap-

proval, could, at the imperative call of duty and conscience, officiate as the priestess of her own household and immediate neighborhood. To her neglected neighbors, hungering for the bread of life, she could not refuse the religious ministrations imparted to her own family, till her at first small congregation, increasing as the efficacy of these religious services was bruited abroad, she found herself, at last, ministering to the spiritual necessities of a large company of serious seekers of religion; when, until her husband's return, she only meant to keep up the family devotions. True to the Wesley spirit, never to shrink from duty, however her modesty may have been put to the blush, her

14 HEROINES OF METHODISM.

religious principles, firm and unyielding, strengthened her for the providential task allotted to her. Yet, at the same time—and it might be a lesson to those who would subvert the divine order of conjugal supremacy—we see what deference she manifested to the will of her husband, when, after stating in full her weighty and conscientious reasons for holding these meetings, she, in a letter to him at the time, goes on to say:

“If you do think fit, after all, to dissolve these meetings, do not tell me that you desire me to do it—for that will not satisfy my conscience—but send me your positive command in such full and express terms as may absolve me from all guilt and

punishment for neglecting the opportunity of doing good, when you and I shall appear before the great and awful tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"I take it for granted," Dr. Clarke sagaciously remarks, "this letter was decisive; and Mrs. Wesley's meetings continued till her husband's return to Epworth. They would then be given up, of course; and yet, from the *fruits*, it must be evident that God had done more in a few months by this irregular ministry than he had done by the rector and his curate for eighteen years before. For my own part, I should ever feel myself disposed to bow with profound respect to that rare dispensation of providential grace

16 HEROINES OF METHODISM.

which should, in similar circumstances, with as clear and distinct a call, raise up a woman of such talents and piety to labor in the gospel where the people were perishing for lack of knowledge, and so snatch the brands from eternal fire."

Susanna was the youngest daughter of Dr. Samuel Annesley, who was son of a brother of the Earl of Anglesea. He was a distinguished Non-conformist minister, who, when at Oxford, was remarked for industry and piety. De Foe, who sat under his preaching, has drawn his character as perfect. Baxter said he was a man devoted to God and Calamy, that he was an Israelite indeed, sanctified from the womb.

He had almost the incredible number of twenty-five children, but his estate was so large that his charity could be, as it was, "unbounded."

Mrs. Wesley's birth took place in 1669 or 1670. She was educated entirely by her father, and was said to be his favorite child. He allowed her the same privilege of independent investigation which he demanded for himself. At the age of thirteen, after a thorough investigation of both sides of the controversy, she renounced her father's views of Non-conformity, became decidedly High-church in her views, and afterward married an orthodox Churchman; while so filial and prudent was she in all, that no shade of disagreement, for her change of

doctrine, ever occurred between her father and herself, or any member of the family.

With all the advantages of birth, wealth, education, and position, Mrs. Wesley is represented also to have been very graceful and beautiful. Her sister, Miss Judith Annesley, painted by the celebrated limner of that day, Sir Peter Lely, though uncommonly beautiful, as adjudged by all, was not thought so beautiful as Mrs. Wesley. There is a portrait taken of Mrs. Wesley when she was quite young. Her appearance then is that of the refined and elegant lady; her features are represented as delicate and classically regular. Her attire—and in this, we would remark, she might serve

as a model to our modern Methodist ladies—was the simplest fashion of the day. The picture, with its fine Grecian contour, is the softened image of that handed down to us of her son John; and they seemed not more physically than mentally and morally to resemble each other. An exact equipoise of faculties distinguished not more the son than the mother, whose genius, as his, harmonized on every occasion with the dictates of common sense; the influence of which happy balance of character, together with her cheerful, active piety, proved a tower of strength for her husband and children in every difficulty and perplexity.

A prize, indeed, of no common

value fell to the lot of the Rector of Epworth, Mr. Samuel Wesley, to whom she was united in marriage when she was about twenty, he being seven or eight years her senior. She became the mother of nineteen children. The circumstances of the Rector of Epworth were exceedingly straitened—not so much, as might be supposed, from the size of his family, as from losses occasioned from two destructive fires, by one of which the rectory was entirely consumed, and the future founder of Methodism so narrowly escaping with life that he frequently represented himself as “a brand plucked from the burning.”

Whether from necessity or choice, the education of all the children of

the family was conducted under the parental roof. Mrs. Wesley's mind was naturally vigorous, and profited well by the classical course which had been prescribed for it. Latin, Greek, French, Logic, Metaphysics, formed part of her curriculum; and her scientific and literary acquisitions—though never obtruded, for Mrs. Wesley was far from being “a *blue*”—were *felt* in all her conversation and writings. A woman of great independence of mind and originality of thought, her search for truth, the whole truth, was earnest and indefatigable, and the truth she had thus obtained she would sell to none. She was not afraid to look difficulties in the face, and had a mind, says one of her

biographers, which "searched itself to the bottom."

Her manner of teaching was singular, but successful. The child at five was put to its letters, which were taught to it in one day, this one day being almost exclusively devoted by her to this one object. Then, beginning at the first chapter of Genesis, the child was made to spell the first verse, read it over and over until done without hesitation, and so on with the next verse. Ten verses constituted the lesson. Her children were all fine readers and correct spellers.

Of her patience and perseverance in duty we have the following characteristic anecdote. Being, on one occasion, engaged in teaching one

of her sons (who knows, but the future founder of Methodism?), she was compelled to repeat the lesson so many times that at length the less patient father exclaimed: "How can you endure to repeat the same thing twenty times to that dull boy?" "For the very good reason," she replied, "that the repeating it *nineteen* times to him does not suffice to teach him the lesson."

Mr. Ferguson, who has given us a brief sketch of this most excellent woman, remarks concerning this incident: "The moral of this example imbued her sons with her spirit, and may have suggested that rule for a preacher laid down in our Book of Discipline, 'Make out what you take in hand.' The enlarged

24 HEROINES OF METHODISM.

meaning of which is, Never be conquered!—a comment on the text, ‘To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the tree of life.’ What an incitement to the instructor and helper of the weak, the faint-hearted, the ready-to-halt, the doubting, the despairing!”

Mr. Wesley speaks of the serenity with which his mother transacted business, wrote letters, and conversed, while surrounded by her children. As all her children were educated by herself, and all the business of the family, together with the secular concerns of the rectory, managed by her, she must have been a woman of method, as well as of energy and untiring industry, to get through with all she

did. Although very strictly and by rule, as her children were brought up by her, there seemed to be no clashings or collisions of interest among them; their hearts, too, were considered in her system of education, and their best sympathies cultivated and appealed to. They were universally reported to have been "the most loving family in all Lincoln," and she, the mother, was the source and center of all this love. John and Martha (Mrs. Hall) seemed most to cling to her. It is true, Charles once said he wondered at a woman of his mother's strength of mind showing so much partiality to one child as she did to Patty; but the other children thought Patty deserved it. Patty

loved most, appreciated most, hung upon her mother's words, walked in her ways, minded the same things.

Martha, as it turned out, was most unfortunately married; but she was a noble woman—one of such genius and vigor of intellect that the great colossus of English literature, Dr. Johnson, took uncommon delight in her society. She often dined with him, and Boswell mentions his unusual deference to her opinions. Mrs. Wright, another daughter, was able to read Greek in her eighth year. They had all, more or less, poetic talent, and nearly all of them excelled in music. Dr. Clarke, in summing up his "Memoirs of the Wesley Family," thus expresses himself: "Such

a family I have never read of or known: not since the days of Abraham, and Sarah, and Joseph, and Mary of Nazareth, has there ever been a family to which the human race has been more indebted." She, who looked so well to the ways of her household, was, of course, no common woman. To none of her sex of whom we have ever read can be applied more appropriately the description of the perfect woman in Prov. xxxi. Beginning at the tenth verse, and reading to the end of the chapter, each panegyric line would seem to portray Susanna Wesley, and inspired wisdom, as with pen of light, seems there to daguerreotype that virtuous, faithful, energetic, industrious, provident, wise

woman, "the mother of Methodism."

John was "the maturity of his mother's efforts." He deferred to her opinion on all occasions, consulted her in every difficulty, and entreated an interest in her prayers. She had been always accustomed to have a set time for the religious instruction of each child, and for praying especially for it. Thursday evening had been allotted to John. When a young man at college, he writes to implore her still to grant him "that Thursday evening."

Mr. Wesley's practical knowledge of education and the proper training of children was largely derived from his mother. In reply to a letter from him on this important

subject, she says: “In order to form the minds of the children, the first thing to be done is to conquer the will, and bring them to an obedient temper. To inform the understanding is the work of time, and must, with children, proceed by slow degrees, as they are able to bear it; but the subjecting the will is a thing which must be done at once, and the sooner the better; for, by neglecting timely correction, they will contract a stubbornness and obstinacy which are hardly ever after conquered, and never without severity as painful to me as the child. In the esteem of the world they pass for kind and indulgent, whom I call cruel, parents, to permit their children to get habits which they

30 HEROINES OF METHODISM.

know must be afterward broken.
. . . I insist upon conquering the *will* of children betimes, because this is the only strong and rational foundation of a religious education, without which both precept and example will be ineffectual. But when this is thoroughly done, then a child is capable of being governed by the reason and piety of its parents till its own understanding comes to maturity, and the principles of religion have taken root in the mind. I cannot dismiss this subject: as self-will is the root of all sin and misery, so whatever cherishes this in children insures their after-wretchedness and irreligion; whatever checks and mortifies it promotes their future happiness and

piety. This is still more evident, if we consider that religion is nothing else than doing the will of God, and not our own; that the one grand impediment to our temporal and eternal happiness being this *self-will*, no indulgence of it can be trivial, no denial unprofitable. Heaven or hell depends on this alone; so that the parent who studies to subdue it in his child works together with God in the renewing and saving of a soul."

Dr. Clarke says, "Mrs. Wesley never considered herself discharged from the care of her children. Into all situations she followed them with her prayers and counsels; and her sons, even at the university, found the utility of her wise and affection-

32 HEROINES OF METHODISM.

ate instructions. They proposed to her all their doubts, and consulted her in all their difficulties." Her counsels are marked with wisdom; and there is an elastic vigor in her thoughts and originality in the manner of expressing them that evince her a woman of uncommon intellectual powers. In a letter to John, in regard to partaking of the pleasures of the world, she expresses herself thus: "Would you judge of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of pleasure, of the innocency or malignity of actions, take this rule (O that all Christians would take it): Whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the relish of spiritual things

—in short, whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind—that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself.”

Not only her wisdom and parental care are manifested in her letters to her children, but also her enlightened piety, her deep spirituality. She remarks, “The way to heaven is so narrow, the gate we must enter in so strait, that it will not permit a man to pass with one unmortified sin about him.”

Again, she writes:

“‘Believe me, youth, for I am real in cares,
And bend beneath the weight of more than
fifty years.’

“Believe me, dear son, old age is

the worst time we can choose to mend either our lives or our fortunes. If the foundations of solid piety are not laid betimes in sound principles and virtuous dispositions—if we neglect, while strength and vigor last, to lay up something ere the infirmities of age overtake us—it is a hundred to one odds that we shall die both poor and wicked. O my son, did you with me stand on the verge of life, and see before your eyes a vast expanse, an unlimited duration of being, which you might shortly enter upon, you cannot conceive how all the inadvertences, mistakes, and sins of youth would rise to your view!”

Mr. Wesley was ever ardent in his expressions of attachment to his

mother—even expressing a wish that he might not survive so good and kind a parent. In reply to something of this kind, she says: “The conclusion of your letter was very kind. That you were ever dutiful I well know, but I am acquainted with myself enough to know, to rest satisfied with, a moderate degree of your affections. Your prayers I want and wish, nor shall I cease while I live to pray Almighty God to bless you.”

Mrs. Wesley lived for her children. She seemed, from the time of John’s providential escape from the flames of the burning rectory, to be impressed with a sense of his having a special mission in the world. “I do intend,” she writes,

“to be more particularly careful of the soul of this child, that Thou hast so mercifully preserved, than ever I have been, that I may do my endeavor to instill into his mind the principles of true religion and virtue.” John felt and acknowledged all he owed her, and attributed the awakening from his moral lethargy, and the divine illumination imparted to him, to the prayers of his mother. Even in respect to his preaching, we read of her tendering him advice. She writes, at one time: “However curious you may be in searching into the nature, or in distinguishing the passions and virtues, of human kind, for your own private satisfaction, be very cautious in giving nice distinctions in public as-

semblies; for it does not answer the true end of preaching, which is to mend men's lives, and not fill their heads with unprofitable speculations." At one time, when a school was offered him, his mother objected to his accepting it, intimating that the Lord had a higher work for him to do.

Mrs. Wesley, by well ordering her time, had, notwithstanding various and many duties, her literary pursuits. Few remains of these, apart from her letters, have come down to us. Many of her writings, we are told, were destroyed by the devastating fire at Epworth. The rector was a most indefatigable "beater of rhyme," to which he facetiously attributes his poverty; but justice to

the muse should have made him acknowledge to her his living at Epworth, tendered to him by Queen Mary for some complimentary couplets. As to Mrs. Wesley, we are not aware that she ever made a rhyme. The poetical talent of the children, as far at least as the mechanical part is considered, was not from her; but the vigor of intellect, elasticity of spirit, independence of thought, energy, decision, method, undoubtedly were. Her sons, in all their perplexities and trials, came to her. Her strong mind and clear head, together with her warm heart, never failed them; and her husband found in these his ever-ready and reliable resource. Nay, even more than the jewelry which she sent to pay for

his release from the debtors' prison, did he value the noble spirit with which he knew she would bear up under the affliction of his incarceration.

Although, as has been stated, few of her literary compositions remain, still the few that have survived fire and time are highly creditable to the head and heart of even a Susanna Wesley. Dr. Clarke calls her "Evidences of Revealed Religion," and "A Treatise on the Chief Article of the Christian's Faith," which he gives us in "The Wesley Family," a most invaluable paper, "a precious relic of a very extraordinary woman." Her manual of private devotion, also given us in the same work, is an admirable aid to spirituality.

We may be allowed here to introduce one of these devotions, as a specimen. They were not only for morning and evening, but for noon. We cite one for the evening:

“If to esteem and have the highest reverence for thee; if constantly and sincerely to acknowledge thee the supreme, the only desirable Good, be to love thee, I do love thee! If comparatively to despise and undervalue all the world contains which is esteemed fair, great, or good; if earnestly and constantly to desire thee—thy favor, thy acceptance, thyself—rather than any or all things thou hast created, be to love thee, I do love thee! If to rejoice in thy essential glory and majesty; if to feel a vital joy overspread and

cheer the heart at each perceptance of thy blessedness, at every thought that thou art God, and that all things are in thy power, and that there is no superior, or equal, to thee, be to love thee, I do love thee!"

Her writings contain so much of the marrow of divinity that, as Dr. Clarke says, "if we might apply the expression to a woman, she was an able divine." Her works might be compiled and published, indeed, with spiritual profit to the Church, forming a brief but interesting manual of devotional reading.

Mrs. Wesley had severe domestic trials. She was always oppressed with poverty. With it and gentility, like many ministers' wives from that day to the present, she was obliged

to struggle. The living of Epworth of only £200 a year could not very well meet the wants of nineteen children —“one per annum,” as the rector jocosely remarked. But they considered each one as a fresh claim upon the Divine bounty; and Mrs. Wesley remarked, after an experience of fifty years, “I have learned, from the best observation I have been able to make, it is much easier to be contented without riches than with them.”

In their large family, in the natural course of things, bereavement followed bereavement; and some of her daughters married very unfortunately. Her heart was keenly sensitive to these domestic afflictions. In a touching letter to her brother, she alludes to them, thus :

“O sir, O brother, happy—thrice happy—are you, happy is my sister, that buried your children in infancy, secure from temptation, secure from guilt and shame, secure from the loss of friends! Believe me, it is better to mourn ten children dead than one living, and I have buried many.”

As a Christian, Mrs. Wesley's light shone more and more unto the perfect day. Living at a period when the privileges of God's people were not, in all cases, clearly marked out, she did not, till late in life, enjoy the full assurance of faith. This she first realized when receiving the Lord's Supper from the hands of her son-in-law, Mr. Hall. A woman of eminent piety she always was, as

not only her words, but her works, testify; yet, not being at first so fully enlightened in regard to the privileges of God's children, her Christian experience for many years was not so clear and satisfactory as it afterward became under the luminously scriptural teachings of her sons, John and Charles. The latter, by the way, was very unfortunate in the composition of her epitaph, by which she is represented to have lived "a legal night of seventy years." Like her godly father, of whom Calamy says, "He knew not the time when he was unconverted," so, in all probability, was it with Mrs. Wesley.

. Brought up in the lap of religion, a minister's granddaughter, daughter, wife, mother, and, at length, grand-

mother, it would seem she might have been "one sanctified from the womb." Her states of grace she might not, from obscure religious teachings, have been competent even to designate by name; but that, even before she openly testified to have received the full assurance of faith, the grace of God abounded in her, and she had fellowship with the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, is clearly evident from the unwavering testimony of her holy life and godly conversation.

Her High-church principles, as in the case of her sons, gave way to the emergencies of the gospel; nor could any prejudice of opinion, or preconceived notion, stand in the way of the salvation of souls. Ac-

cordingly, we behold her, till the end of her days, a zealous co-worker with her sons in the spread of "Christianity in earnest" — otherwise called Methodism. She approved their field-preaching, and accompanying John to Kensington Common, stood by his side while he preached to twenty thousand people. What Christian mother might aspire to more honorable position? More glorious than a place by the side of any earthly monarch! Her sons, after she became a widow, provided a home for her on the premises of the Foundry Chapel; and here, in the "parsonage," as in the "rectory," did this mother in Israel pray for her sons, and counsel them in their momentous responsibilities.

A more than Spartan mother was Susanna Wesley. When her consent was asked for her sons, John and Charles, to go out as missionaries to distant, and then uncivilized, Georgia, though then in her widowed state, and dependent mainly upon them for comfort and support, hear her answer: "If I had twenty sons, I should rejoice that they were all so employed, though I should never see them again."

These were, indeed, "the heroic days of Methodism." This was its first heroine. Who will take for example this model mother? All may not be so highly gifted by nature and education, but the same grace, to which she was most indebted for her superior excellence—which threw

a halo around her life, and will make her in heaven shine as a star—is as accessible and free to all as it was to her.

After her husband's death, Mrs. Wesley, as we have said, lived with her sons, John and Charles, where she was freed from all worldly cares and anxieties; where, in return for the love and care she had unstintedly bestowed upon them from infancy to manhood, they were privileged and honored in ministering to her temporal and spiritual comforts and necessities.

Of her last moments her well-beloved son, John, gives the following account:

“I found my mother on the borders of eternity; but she had no

doubts, no fear, nor any desire but, as soon as God should call her, to depart and be with Christ. Tuesday, 23d July, 1742, about three in the afternoon, I went to see my mother. I found her change was near. I sat down on the bed-side. She was in her last conflict, unable to speak, but I believe quite sensible. Her look was calm and serene, and her eyes fixed upward, while we commended her soul to God. From three to four, the silver cord was loosing and the wheel breaking at the cistern, and then, without any struggle, or sigh, or groan, the soul was set at liberty. We stood around the bed and fulfilled her last request, uttered a little while before she lost her speech: ‘Children, as soon as I

am released, sing a psalm of praise to God.'”

She died in her seventy-third year.

It will be seen that Mrs. Wesley, from the portrait we have been enabled to give of her, was a noble Christian woman—“a perfect woman, nobly planned,” as the poet expresses it. With all her surrounding disabilities, we see how much she accomplished. Because she had a large family, small income, little time, she did not plead exemption from duty; and because she did the duty at her elbow *first*, she did not, for that, fail in doing the duty *farther off*. Her mission, emphatically and peculiarly, was with her house-full of children at home; but that did not prevent her also following her Saviour, *going*

about doing good. Retiring, as she naturally was, when in her husband's absence her neighbors applied to her for religious instruction, she did not, for the coward fear of the implication of courting publicity, send them uncared-for away. She was a brave woman. She went right up to "the lions" that menaced her in her duty-path, unblenching, unfearing. Of course, she found them "chained." So will courageous faith ever find them. She possessed, with her sons, that virtue so frequently and strenuously urged upon us in Scripture—courage. "Add to your faith virtue, which is *courage*." "Can such an one as *I* flee?" she might have interrogatively demanded. Being charged with holding a convent-

icle was as nothing to her, when thereby she might save souls; and we cannot fail to perceive in this the germ of Methodism, and of lay-preaching, of which she was the first advocate. Here, too, we perceive the buddings of that great religious development that was destined to overspread the world—the mustard-seed that was to become the greatest of herbs.

The appreciative study of Mrs. Wesley's character would dissolve a popular and injurious prejudice that women must needs be less modest, gentle, and amiable in proportion as they possess spirit, resolution, and energy. Most women, it would appear, are called more to the passive virtues than to the active; more to

the subjective than to the objective; more to in-door work than to out-door exhibitions; more to private duties than to public. Yet this seemingly natural order, in the providence of God, may be reversed. When a woman is thus circumstanced, like Mrs. Wesley, with a blush on her cheek and a prayer in her heart, she should adopt, practically, the noble sentiment of Herbert:

Only, since God doth often make
Of lowly matter for high uses meet,
I throw me at his feet;
There will I lie, until my Maker seek
For some mean stuff whereon to show his
skill:
Then is my time.

54 HEROINES OF METHODISM.

TO MRS. WESLEY.

THOU didst not deem, when sowing that
good seed,

In early morn, and not thy hand with-
holding

At evening late, that faith should be un-
folding

So soon to sight, an hundred-fold, indeed.

Thou hadst not hoped such harvest for thy
toil,

Thou hadst not looked for such reward
exceeding;

Albeit, God's precious promise ever heed-
ing,

That they who sow shall also reap, the while.

And that good word still strengthened thee
to do,

With hands, head, heart, the wants of all
supplying;

To soul, mind, body's need, still undeny-
ing,

Thou faithful wife, thou mother, tender, true.


And he, the benefactor of his race,
Blest angel of the Church, whose ministry
Earth's benefaction, through all time,
shall be,
All that was best in him to thee did trace.

To thee, woman of faith and fervent prayer;
To thee, the grace of God still strengthening, guiding;
To thee, with trust in Heaven, sure and abiding;
To thee, thus blessed with graces rich and rare—

Owes the whole Christian world a debt to thee:

A Wesley-fruit of thy maternal teaching,
Whose blessing to the world, time's bounds outreaching,
Is limited but by eternity.

MRS. FLETCHER.

HRISTIANITY, without reference to its regenerative influence in forming the new creature, serves more frequently to modify the character than to alter it. Mrs. Fletcher, the holy and devout woman, whom we would attempt to portray, was, we acknowledge, eccentric as a Christian. She would have been so equally as a woman of the world. It was the blemish in her fine nature—the flaw in the otherwise perfect porcelain—exposing her to frequent misapprehen-

sion, while causing, often, her good to be evil spoken of. A child, in reference to a character of this kind, remarked, "He must have been trodden upon while young." Mrs. Fletcher was, in her early youth, in some sort thus trodden upon. She possessed, in a great degree, the religious element, manifesting it at the tender age of five, while inquiring of those about her if such and such things were so; but her questions were impatiently or lightly put aside, both with herself and sister of the same religious caste of mind. This treatment, though disconcerting to them, did not discourage their desire for religious information, which, failing to receive from their legitimate and proper in-

structors, the young sisters obtained from a servant-maid in the employment of the family, but who had lived with the people called Methodists, and had heard and experienced somewhat of evangelical religion. God sometimes raises up strange preachers, and appoints their field of labor in strange places. That the place is the right one we may know whenever the seed of the gospel there germinates, as here it did, and brought forth fruit an hundred fold, to God's honor and glory. The maid that pointed out the way of salvation to Naaman, the Syrian, did no greater work than the maid that pointed out this way to Mary Fletcher, *nee* Bosanquet.

She was born at Laytonstone, in

the county of Essex, England, in 1739. Her family were aristocratic, wealthy, and fashionable. They were members of the Established Church, and were, of course, not openly hostile to the forms of religion; but, alas! "its power they never knew," or, far from opposing, or even persecuting, their young daughters in their searchings and strivings after truth, they would have sedulously instructed them in those things which made for their peace; gently leading them, step by step, along the green pastures and still waters of God's love; alluring them to brighter worlds, and leading the way by a oneness of spirit with their children, so early called of God to his service; and thus making up a happy, united

family, instead of one disturbed, divided, and torn asunder. When their young children asked for bread, O why, instead of a stone, did they not give them the manna of eternal life? A duty less and inferior to provide sustenance for the perishing body than for the soul that never dies.

The elder Miss Bosanquet was married when the younger was about the age of sixteen. The Methodist servant-maid, suspicion of her spiritual influence having been now aroused, was turned off, and her books removed. These young girls had never been subjects of such influence had they enjoyed the confidence and companionship of religious parents. It was certainly wrong of

them to withhold from them this knowledge of the influence of another over their minds; certainly, it was wrong in them to have any—even a religious—secret from their father and mother; but, as these latter had sowed, so they reaped; by neglect and harshness they had repelled their children's confidence, which otherwise had been theirs alone. Religion is a want of the soul—a craving necessity—as much a spiritual need as food and water are natural ones; if denied to the soul by one, then it is sought from another, as in the case of these children. Sometimes it is denied to the soul by one's own carnal heart and corrupt nature—then does the soul itself become as the charnel-house of death;

62 HEROINES OF METHODISM.

and for one with such soul as that
“better for him that he had never
been born.”

The oldest sister's removal, with that of the Methodist maid-servant, left Mary companionless in her religious life. Who among those of her own household, or circle, could understand the language of Canaan, or the expressions of a heart so early weaned from the world, and longing for the bliss of heaven? Her zeal, untempered by knowledge, led her sometimes to say and do those things unbecoming her years, her position in society, or her relation as child to parent, which, with better instructed, but not less sincere, piety, she herself afterward bitterly lamented, and for which she

wrote bitter things against herself. Reverting to that time, she says: "Alas! I thought I walked as a Christian, but now I see so much more of the holiness of God, I am astonished that either God or man bore with me;" and then, with her wonted candor, goes on to say, "I do not wonder that my dear mother should not love me as the rest of her children, for I was not only more dull and indolent in every thing I had to learn, but I gave way to an insolent and disobedient spirit to the whole family in such a degree that the recollection has often seemed to draw blood from my heart."

At sixteen, she writes: "I saw the time was come when I must confess Christ before men." Although

no one with Scripture views of religious duty can object to her conduct in firmly refusing her own father's invitation to the theater, and his request that she would not attempt "to make her brothers what *she* called a Christian," still we think, as far as one may with no personal cognizance of the matter, that she might, and without dissimulation, either, have refused her father with a more tender grace than perhaps she did; for though her obedience to him was, as she considered, only "in the Lord," still she might have softened her refusal, we *think*. But it is a nice thing to judge a case of conscience.

Refusing to accompany the family on a visit of pleasure, whither they

offered to take her, "if she would do as they did, and not bring a reproach upon them in a strange place," she was consigned to the care of an uncle in London, where she found some religious companions, but where her constant attendance at "meetings" threw her into a low, nervous fever; and thus her religion was brought into disrepute, and the prejudices of her parents strengthened. But, poor child! for the first time at liberty to hear, unrestrained, the earnest preaching of the gospel, can it be a matter of wonder that she let not her moderation be known unto all? That she was in this to blame, in her simple candor no one was more ready to acknowledge than herself; but the effect of these earn-

est religious ministrations on her own mind was that the prospect of a life wholly devoted to God now absorbed every other consideration; and thenceforth all her purposes and plans, it could not but be seen, were in reference to that set-apart life to which she devoutly believed she had been called by that Divine mandate which none, with impunity, may disobey.

Having attained her majority, and being possessed of some property in her own right, it was thought best, by both parents and child, that she should take separate lodgings. Their secret purpose, no doubt, was to bring her to their views by this really, if not ostensibly, coercive measure; if this failed of its effect,

then, for her own comfort, as well as for theirs, she would be better away from a gay, fashionable house, such as theirs was. But if they supposed her banishment from home might have this effect, they were doomed to disappointment. In the following words, she gives us to understand her future life:

“About eight o’clock I reached my lodgings, when, bolting the door, I began to muse on my present situation. ‘I am,’ I said, ‘but young—only entered into my twenty-second year. I am cast out of my father’s house.’ I could, in a measure, have faith in these words: ‘When thy father and thy mother forsake thee, the Lord shall take thee up.’ The following reflections also arose in

my mind: 'I am now exposed to the world, and know not what snares may be gathering around me. I have a weak understanding, and but little grace. Therefore, it behooves me now, before any snare has entangled me, to form a plan for my future life, and endeavor to walk thereby.' " Here is her plan of defense:

"First, I will not receive visits from single men; and, in order to evade the trial more easily, I will not get acquainted with any. Second, I will endeavor to lay out my time by rule, that I may know each hour what is to be done; nevertheless, I will cheerfully consent to have these rules broken, or overturned, whenever the providence of

God thinks fit to do so. And, thirdly, I will endeavor to fix my mind on the example of Jesus Christ, and to lead a mortified life; remembering ‘He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.’”

She now felt as if God had set her free for his service, and, uniting herself to the Wesleyan Society, she gave up her thoughts to religion, and her time to doing good to the souls and bodies of her fellow-creatures. It was thought by others, as by her own family, that the labors and privations of her life would weary her, and she would repent of the path she had chosen; but not so—she could have been satisfied with no other. She felt herself called of God, in a peculiar manner, to live

and work for him and his cause. Had she not obeyed this call in the way she did, with all her energies and powers, her conscience would have continually reproached her, and she would have been miserable. All do not feel called to serve God after her *manner*—though with like spirit she did believe the call imperative and divine to serve God just in the way she did; had she done otherwise, she would have been self-condemned, and we would not have read these cheerful words: “I have the gospel—I have freedom to serve God—I have spiritual blessings; what more do I need?”

It is proper to say that she frequently saw her parents, with whom, though living apart from them, the

kindest intercourse was kept up. With their opposite views, they both deemed it best to live in separate homes, while at the same time united in affection.

After having been about two years in her first lodgings, she, with her deeply pious friend, Miss Ryan, removed to a house of her own at Laytonstone, that had become vacant. Her home here soon became a refuge for the poor and the orphan, and a home for the preachers. Wesley speaks of it as "a truly Christian family home," and says, "O what a house for God is here! not only for decency and order, but for the life and power of religion." After some time, the institution, from some cause, was removed to York. There,

also, Wesley visited it, and said, "It is a pattern and a blessing to the country." But its reputation for charity and hospitality brought to it so great an influx of inmates, from all parts of the kingdom, that the liberal hostess' "plenty of silver" at last gave out; and she would have been involved in serious difficulties, but for the helping head and hand of a friend in need, who now appears upon the scene. But this *friend* would not be satisfied with that relation, but persistently entreated to become to her more than friend or brother, making her an offer of his hand, heart, and purse. "That few women in her situation would have hesitated to accept so advantageous an offer" is true; for his affections,

she informs us, were strong, sincere, and constant—his offers generous, his sentiments tender. “He loved my family,” she also states, “and whoever was kind to me found favor in his sight. This could not but operate on my gratitude. I was deeply pained, but I could not see in him the man my highest reason chose to obey. Firstly: I did not so honor the light he had in religion as to believe it my privilege to be led thereby. Secondly: Though he was a good man, and helpful to people in every respect, yet he did not see the narrow path of walking close to God as I could wish the man I took for a husband to do. Thirdly: Though I had a grateful love toward him, I could not find that sat-

74 HEROINES OF METHODISM.

isfying affection which flows from perfect confidence, and which is the very spirit and soul of marriage. I felt, however, in the keenest manner, the need I had of his assistance in the management of my affairs; but I thought it ungenerous, to the last degree, to accept of help and counsel from one whose growing affection I was too sensible of, but to which I could make no return. I used the plainest terms in assuring him of the impossibility of his affection for me ever being reciprocated, and proposed the breaking off of all acquaintance. He alleged, in answer, ‘You cannot do without me—you will be ruined; God has made me your helper, and if you cannot see and feel as I do, we will

be only common friends.' " Having made her business arrangements with him, she left the neighborhood, and went to reside for some months at Bath and Bristol—not sorry to make an excuse, she says, for getting two hundred miles from poor Mr. ———, with whom her connection must have been so painfully embarrassing.

After an absence of six months, she returned—not without that kind of sensation, she says, which a child would have in returning to the rod. The difficulties in the way of supporting her large family still remained. "Yet something," says she at that time, "in my heart tells me, 'A time is at hand when the Lord will bring thee out of these deep

waters;' and I am determined to stand still and see his salvation."

On the 8th of June, in consonance with many previous impressions—for this maiden, though so long "fancy-free," still dreamt dreams—she received a letter from Mr. Fletcher, in which he told her that he had for twenty-five years cherished a regard for her, and that, though it might appear odd he should write on such a subject when but just returned from abroad, and without first seeing her, he could only say his mind was so strongly drawn to it he believed it to be of God. He was deterred thus long from addressing her because of her possessing a large fortune, and therefore his motives were liable to be suspected.

This letter could not but appear to the lady in the light of a striking accomplishment of her presentiments; it answered in every particular to the marks by which she had desired such an event should be characterized; and, whatever may be thought of her dreams and impressions, the hand of Providence must be distinctly seen in the event. They corresponded for some time, when Mr. Fletcher came, and spent a month in the neighborhood where she lived, preaching there with his usual fervency and success. He then returned to his parish, for until her farm could be disposed of and her family provided for, she could not marry even him. Week after week elapsed, when a gentleman pur-

chased, to her advantage, we may presume, all her possessions, while a way seemed providentially opened for each member of her large family, so that a comfortable living was provided for each one.

She was married to Mr. Fletcher, her first and last and only love, in November, 1781. About a year afterward, Mr. Fletcher wrote to Charles Wesley, who, unlike his brother John, knew the felicity of a happy marriage: "I thank you for your hint about exemplifying the love of Christ and his Church. I hope we do. I was afraid; at first, to say much of the matter, for new married people do not at first know each other; but having now lived fourteen months in my new state, I

can tell you, Providence has reserved a prize of no common value for me, and that my wife is far better to me than the Church is to Christ; so that if the parallel fail, it will be on my side." Yes, he had now found that good thing—a good wife: "a woman," says Southey, in his "History of Methodism," "perfectly suited to him in age, temper, piety, and talents;" and, how well did he, as her husband, realize the pure ideal she had so long enshrined in her heart! If ever there was a human being perfect in every good word and work, it was Fletcher, of Madeley. In Mary Bosanquet he found his helpmeet indeed. They were both, after their marriage, more devoted, if possible, to the cause of Christ than ever—

erecting chapels, opening new places of worship, establishing Sunday-schools, which were about that time first introduced. Their labors for the Church, in her every interest and enterprise, left a blessing everywhere they visited. Mrs. Fletcher never obtruded herself into the pulpit, but there was a seat elevated a step or two above the level of the floor, whence she addressed the people in the chapels, in the vicinity of Madeley, erected by herself and husband. Her good sense and modesty secured her respect, notwithstanding her extraordinary course. "I think the case lies here," said Mr. Wesley to her, "in your having an extraordinary call. It is plain to me that the whole work of God called Meth-

odism is an extraordinary dispensation of his providence. St. Paul's rule was, 'I permit not a woman to speak in the congregation,' yet, in extraordinary cases, he made a few exceptions—at Corinth, in particular."

In that day, when the harvest was so great and the laborers so few, if the very stones would cry out if men would not, why not women? But these emergencies are past, it is to be hoped, so that woman may find work to do for her Lord more appropriate and less trying than public ministrations in the sanctuary.

In regard to Mrs. Fletcher's ministrations, Wesley said: "Her words were as a fire, conveying both light and heat to the hearts of all who heard her."

82 HEROINES OF METHODISM.

She guarded against extravagance in her meetings, and reproved every thing like "an untimely enthusiasm." What the old preachers used to call "wild-fire," she utterly reprobated, and by every means tried to keep under. Yet, with characteristic humility, she remarks: "It is a great trial for me to have to reprove them, because many of them are much farther advanced in grace than I am." She adjudged it to be "one of the most delicate things in the world" to extinguish false fire, and at the same time to keep alive the true. Doubtless she sympathized with, while condemning, this untimely enthusiasm, having herself, in her early Christian life, been too much governed by those "frames and feel-

ings" which her mature and better disciplined piety kept in proper abeyance, and rendered subservient to the pure word of Christ contained in his gospel. She no longer saw visions and dreamed dreams. Her hope was built on a more substantial basis. As much heat as ever in her zeal, there was more light. She was naturally of an exceedingly fine nervous organization. This constitutional disability she had, in a measure, to contend with all her life; but when she attained her growth in grace—her perfect Christian womanhood—"she put away these childish things," and we hear no more of those marvelous signs and wonders she believed she saw in her early Christian life. But as our

84 HEROINES OF METHODISM.

faith, so be it unto us. Doubtless our blessed Lord, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, may accord to some babes in Christ some sensible tokens of his presence. He speaks to them not as of old by word of mouth, but may, sometimes, by dreams or impressions. He *may*, for all things are possible to his mercy and his grace; but, with rare exceptions, he deals not after this manner with the children of men, who, by simple faith alone, should expect spiritually, only,

The Invisible to appear to sight,
And God be seen by mortal eye;

seen in his attributes and works, in his grace, mercy, and compassion to our fallen race.

Mrs. Fletcher's married life gave

to her four years of as perfect happiness as perhaps ever fell to the lot of mortal—sufficient to compensate for all the trials of her early life, when she sought the Lord, sorrowing. It was, indeed, “in the Lord,” such a marriage; soul joined to its kindred soul at last, after a separation for so long. “She sweetly helps me,” said Fletcher, “to drink the dregs of life, and carry more easily the daily cross;” but soon he went to wear the crown—his resplendent crown—studded with stars innumerable, the souls he had won to Christ. When, after the Sabbath sacramental exercises of four hours, he was borne home exhausted and fainting, it was seen his end was near, and his reward not afar off.

86 HEROINES OF METHODISM.

“I know thy soul,” said his devoted wife, as she bent over him, when he could no longer speak; “I know thy soul, but for the sake of others, if Jesus be very present with thee, lift up thy right hand.” Immediately it was raised. “If the prospects of glory sweetly open before thee, repeat the sign.” He instantly raised it again, and in half a minute a second time. He then threw it up as if he would reach the top of the bed; after this, his hands moved no more.

Mrs. Fletcher survived her husband upward of thirty years. Agreeably to his recommendation, she continued to reside at their consecrated home—Madeley—the new vicar permitting her to rent the parsonage.

August 14th, 1815, she thus writes in her journal: "Thirty years ago this day I drank the bitter cup, and closed the eyes of my beloved husband, and now I am myself in a dying state. Lord prepare me! I feel death very near. Come, my adorable Saviour! I lie at thy feet; I long for all thy fullness."

September 12th: "This day I am seventy-six years old, and the same day my dear husband would have been eighty-six. Surely, we shall remember the scenes we have passed through together; but, O my God, give me power to cleave to thee every moment! O Jesus, fill me with thy love! pour out thy Spirit abundantly upon me, and make my heart thy constant home!"


October 26th: "I have had a bad night; but asking help of the Lord, for closer communion, my precious Lord applied the words, 'I have borne thy sins in my body on the tree.' I felt his presence. I seem very near death, but I long to fly into the arms of my beloved Lord; I feel his loving-kindness surrounds me."

The journal ends here. Her death was very peaceful. To her faithful attendant she said, on retiring for the night: "Now, if I can rest I will, but let our hearts be united in prayer—the Lord bless thee and me!" These were the last words she uttered. Her works of faith and labors of love were ended.

'THE MARRIAGE OF MR. AND MRS.
FLETCHER.

IF ever, in the courts above,
Angels rejoice o'er human bliss,
Then, surely, such a heavenly love—
Such union of the soul as this—
Their holy sympathy would move.
Soul unto soul forever joined,
By more than common earthly ties—
Love, pure, ethereal, and refined,
Whose spirit waxes faint nor dies,
But lives, when dead all human kind.
Of Christ, and of his Church on earth,
Such union is the blessèd type;
And when, in faith, those two went forth
To toil for him, where fields were ripe,
Or where were only drouth and death,
He granted them their hearts' desire:
Souls for their wages—great their wealth.
In such a work they ne'er did tire,
But brought to it time, talents, health;
And ceased not till God called them higher.

MRS. COKE.

ENELOPE Goulding Smith was called upon to bear the yoke in her youth. Both her parents suffered from severe and peculiar bodily afflictions. In her father's case, the sufferings of the body seemed to have in no wise impaired the serenity of his mind; and, faithfully attended unto the last by his only daughter, he finally made a joyful exit from this mortal state, in full possession of a joyful hope of a glorious immortality. The trials of her mother were varied and compli-

cated, and frequently tinged her expressions with a moroseness which wrung with pain the heart of her devoted daughter, whose own delicacy of constitution rendered her sensitive, to a remarkable degree, to neglect or censure. Thus, in the beginning of her life, Penelope was called upon to discharge duties, and did display virtues, which afterward served to render her character illustrious among the brightest Christians of her day and time.

Members of the Established Church of England, her parents early impressed the principles of virtue and morality upon this their only remaining child; and, though a stranger to the glorious privileges of those who are born again in

92 HEROINES OF METHODISM.

Christ Jesus, habits of devotion were firmly fixed in her mind, her conscience was sensitive and tender, and inclined to receive the good seed whenever it should be sown.

Still, though singularly pure in life, devout in observing all the forms of religion, she was a stranger to the blood of the covenant, and sought pleasure from the broken cisterns of worldly amusement and fashionable resorts. Before she had reached the age of twenty, the death of her mother, to whom she was tenderly attached, and in whose sick-room she had spent so many long hours of cheerful attendance, turned her thoughts away from things of this world. Fortunately for her, help was near at hand. Her uncle,

Mr. Gwyer, a local minister of the Wesleyan Connection, now paid a visit to Mr. Smith and his daughter. Discovering, from his conversations with Penelope, that her heart was not at rest, he spoke to her faithfully and plainly on the necessity of experimental and personal religion. His words, and the books she read, convinced her she had been building on a false foundation; she found that purity of life, good works, and even devout conduct, were insufficient for her need, and, in anguish, she cried out, "What must I do to be saved?" Her young companions thought her crazed; that she, who had been an example for them all—she, whose devotion to every good work, whose filial piety, had been a

pattern for them, whose only recreations had been, as they misjudged, the innocent amusements of cards and dancing—should declare herself a lost sinner! So great a proof of insanity was this that they were constrained to keep aloof from her, while she avoided them “because they relished not the things of God.”

Distressed at her state of mind, her father desired her to visit Bristol, hoping the novelties of that gay city might distract her mind from its burden of grief. While there, it was her privilege to attend the ministry of that saintly man, Mr. Valton; and while drinking in the divine word as it fell from his lips, her weight of sin was removed, and God spoke peace to her heavily-laden

soul. In proportion as her grief for sin had been acute, her joy in believing was exquisite. She felt that she had passed "from death unto life." Even while a stranger to the peace which passeth understanding, she had been noted for her good works among the poor; now, she entered upon the work with renewed diligence, and carried relief and comfort not only to the suffering bodies, but to the sin-sick souls, of the poor and destitute around her. Engaged in these ministrations, she was thrown with a small band of Methodists, who had been raised up in Bradford, her home. The similitude which she found between their experiences and her own tended to encourage and establish her faith,

and she soon rose to higher grounds on the celestial road. Though her father was by no means an enemy to Christianity, he strongly disapproved of his daughter's being associated with the Methodists, as they were then a sect everywhere spoken against. Still, sometimes, she was allowed to attend the ministry of Mr. Wesley, or Mr. Collins, and from their preaching her soul would drink in fresh supplies of living water. However, as years rolled by, and she continued his cheerful, devoted nurse, obeying him, without question, in all things—even in this, in which her happiness was so greatly concerned—he began to think the tree which produced such fruit could not be evil, and he no longer

threw obstacles in the way of her following her own desires in the worship of her Lord.

Deeply impressed with the nothingness of time and the value of eternity, she secluded herself from the world, and for a number of years was never seen outside of her own dwelling, except in the homes of the poor, when she went from house to house talking of Jesus, or in attendance upon the public ministry of the word. She by no means, however, neglected the improvement of her intellect, and in her retirement made quite a collection of natural curiosities, shells, feathers, etc., which were all placed in cabinets, and so arranged as to show forth the wonderful greatness and goodness

of Him who called into being all the varied beauties of nature. At this time, too, she made herself familiar with many commentators on the sacred Scriptures, and from these works filled several manuscript volumes with extracts, copied with her own hand, all portraying sound judgment and refined taste, and all bearing upon the love of God to sinners.

After the death of her father, in 1803, Miss Smith found herself more at liberty than she had been for years; but seclusion, which at first was a duty, had now become a habit, added to which a painful disease had taken hold upon her, which increased her disinclination to leave the house. She therefore requested that a class-meeting might be held

in her own house, which meetings continued till the time of her marriage; "and in this place," says one of her godly companions, "we have often been favored with the spiritual appearance of our Lord."

Occasionally her faithfulness in reproving sin, wherever found, exposed her to personal insult. A clergyman of the Established Church once coming to the house, to thank her father for some act of liberality toward him, Penelope thought it her duty to admonish him of the impropriety of spending so many hours at the card-table. Not taking the rebuke in the spirit in which it was offered, the gentleman became exceedingly offended, and left the house in great indignation. Afterward, however,

100 HEROINES OF METHODISM.

when laid upon a bed of sickness, he became truly penitent, freely acknowledged his former errors, and died, at length, an humble Christian.

In her now shone all the graces of the Spirit. Benevolent, liberal, long-suffering, prompt to act and ready to endure for her Master's cause, full of patience and humility, chastened by affliction—God seems to have been preparing her to work in a peculiar way for his name's honor and glory.

After her marriage, in April, 1805, to the Rev. Dr. Coke, of the Wesleyan Connection (the great missionary), she was removed from her stationary to an itinerant life; and amid the tears, prayers, and blessings of the poor, she left the home of her youth

for a more extended field of usefulness.

Shortly after her marriage, her health became more delicate than ever; still, she would never allow her health or convenience to be consulted where her husband's work was concerned, but was always ready to move from place to place at any time or in any season, no matter what the cost might be to health and strength. Though her dread of the sea was violent and unconquerable, she even accompanied her husband in his visits to Ireland, and, by her unshaken faith and singleness of mind to God's glory, held up his hands and sustained his labors in the great work on which he was sent. On their last voyage to Ireland, in May, 1809, a

tremendous storm arose; and though for a time escape from an immediate and awful death seemed impossible, her faith quailed not, and her confidence in God remained unmoved—feeling sure that, living or dying, she was the Lord's. The shock and agitation of her nervous system, however, were so great that her constitution never fully recovered from the effects, and, always feeble, her small remaining stock of strength was seriously impaired.

Great nervous debility and many bodily afflictions being her constant lot, we should naturally expect instability and fluctuations in her sense of joy and peace in the presence of God; but though these times of trial would come, they never found her

unprepared. Strong in her humility, at the first approach of temptation she would flee to her Saviour, and ever found his grace sufficient for her need. The word of God was the man of her counsel, and rarely was she seen without a small Bible in her hand. "I travel sword in hand," she would say sometimes; and she always found God her defense and shield. In the hymns of the Wesleys, too, she had great delight, and the lyrics of the sweet singer of Methodism were often in her heart and on her tongue.


Toward the close of 1810 alarming symptoms of dropsy manifested themselves, and she felt that her end was near. Calmly she met the summons. No preparation for death was

104 HEROINES OF METHODISM.

needed here; no hasty summing up of accounts to meet the king of terrors; no hurried donning of the wedding-garments to appear at the marriage-supper. No. He whom in her early youth she had sought and found had kept her safe unto that day, and gladly she hailed his coming.

The evening before her departure, the forty-sixth Psalm being read to her, "Look," said she, "and see what my Lord Jesus has sent me to-night: here is a cordial—I am assured I can go to rest upon it!" And the very next day—January 25, 1811—she entered upon her rest.

LADY HUNTINGDON.

RITE though the remark may be, it is none the less forcible as well as pathetic, that one of the leading features of our blessed religion is its adaptability to all circumstances and spheres, to every condition and every phase of human existence. Especially does this feature show itself in the phenomenon of the new birth. Incomprehensible, mysterious, and almost incredible as this consciousness of an awakening into life may appear, a cloud of witnesses from every quarter of the

earth, from every degree of social life, will come and testify together that they know that Christ hath power on earth to forgive sins.

Said a newly-converted Christian slave, once: "I never lived before; I feel like I was in heaven; I feel like the angels." Said Lady Margaret Hastings to her sister-in-law, the Countess of Huntingdon, a peeress of the proud realm of Great Britain: "Since I have known and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, I have been as happy as an angel."

In all times and seasons, even when the spiritual horizon seems darkest, God has reserved for himself a few who, working perhaps in the dark, little and unknown, still

are fanning the secret fires which will anon burst forth and illumine the whole face of the heavens with its own glorious blaze. And it should be a cause of deep thankfulness and grateful rejoicing to the women who profess and call upon the name of Christ that he has never let a work of this kind go on without the aid of those who, feeble in body and occupied with the gentler duties of home, not called to stand upon the walls of Zion and preach the everlasting gospel, are still privileged to lend their aid in hastening the coming of the Master's kingdom. Thus, in the grand spiritual awakening of the eighteenth century, there were not wanting noble women willing and able to join heart and hand the de-

voted band who were preparing a work which was to spread throughout Christendom, and carry the glorious doctrines of a free, full, and *present* salvation to those who long had sat in the land of darkness and desolation.

Not the least conspicuous among these noble women was Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, born Selina Shirley, second daughter of Earl Ferrars. From her earliest childhood she appears to have had yearnings for a higher joy and purer love than that which surrounded her, and to have instinctively turned away from all the excitements and splendors by which she was encompassed. The death of a dear friend, of about her own age, made an indelible impres-

sion upon her when a little child; and though, from the high rank and wealth of her parents, every temptation that the gayety and fashion which reigned supreme in one of the most brilliant courts of the day was offered her, she kept aloof, convinced that there must be, somewhere, comfort for the unsatisfied yearning which filled her heart—some answer of peace to the unceasing questions which, day and night, haunted her longing soul.

After her marriage, at the age of twenty-one, to Theophilus, Earl of Huntingdon, her lot was still more cast in the scenes of pleasure which constitute so much of the routine of life at court. Thrown familiarly with men and women whose triumphs in

literature, travel, and science have made their names to us as household words, it might have been thought that in the congenial culture of the society around her she would have found food to satisfy her hungry soul and the rest of intellect for her craving heart; but not so: even here, with brain and heart full and in ceaseless activity, though she strove with scrupulous exactness to do her duty to God and to her neighbor, though she neglected willfully not even the smallest point of the law, still, like the young ruler, in bitterness of soul she cried out, "What lack I yet?" So, with a life outwardly peaceful and prosperous, children born to her, a home of dignity and refinement, an appreciating and

loving husband, wealth, kindred, and friends around her, still with the canker gnawing within, she passed the few first years of her married life.

In the midst of these still beginning, never-ending questions: Who can tell when I have done enough to secure my salvation? how do I know that these good works are done with the right motive? when I have done every thing I can do, what is there for me, then?—tortured with doubt and anxiety—there came to the castle, on a visit, the sisters of the earl—the Ladies Hastings. Refined, charitable, sober-minded, they had always been congenial companions of their sister-in-law; but now she was not slow to perceive that a great change had taken place in one of them—the

Lady Margaret. Her life, her daily walk and conversation, all showed that, though the same Margaret, she was a different person: a constant well-spring of joy and hope seemed ever bubbling up within her breast; and Lady Huntingdon saw that the mind of her sister was perfectly at peace. Not long was she kept in suspense as to the cause of this great change, full of the glow of a new-born soul. Lady Margaret soon unfolded to the anxious inquirer the secret of her present joy.

In her own home, at Sedstone Hall, she, with her sisters, had heard marvellous accounts of the preaching of Mr. Ingham, a man of God who was going from place to place breaking "the bread of life" to hungry thou-

sands. He was invited by the noble sisters to preach in Sedstone Church, and through his blessed instrumentality Margaret was soon rejoicing in the personal knowledge of Christ as her Saviour. The rapturous joy with which she imparted these glad tidings to Lady Huntingdon was a new revelation. She felt there was something in religion to which she was a stranger—a mountain-height attainable, beyond the reach of clouds of despair or fogs of doubt. How could she, too, obtain this joy unspeakable—reach this height supernal? Not by good works, for of her it might well have been said, “Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.” Not by fasts or vigils: of all these had she been rigorously

observant. Where, then, was her hope? Perplexed, harassed, and overwhelmed, she was finally laid prostrate upon a bed of sickness, when at last, with a new meaning, came to her the words of Lady Margaret. Without reservation, she cast herself at Jesus' feet, and immediately was made whole. Never again did a doubt of her acceptance with God trouble her life.

It being through Mr. Ingham that Lady Margaret Hastings had first heard of this new life, naturally, to Mr. Ingham and his associates Lady Huntingdon looked for light and assistance, with her changed views.

About the time of her marriage, the little band at Oxford had begun their glorious work of spiritualizing

the now cold and dead Church of England, and of giving a galvanic touch which should thrill through the whole body of Protestantism. The bounds of no pent-up Utica confined Lady Huntingdon's sympathies and religious zeal. What mattered it to her that Wesley, and Whitefield, and Ingham labored in marshes and on plains, in mountain-fastnesses and in coal-fields? They were doing the work of her Lord—they were children of her Father—and, proudly hailing them as brethren, heart and hand she joined them in the great work of saving souls; and we soon find her the nucleus of a noble company, with one aim, one heart, one purpose. Among this goodly company stand out many names familiar

with a thousand sacred associations: the noble Christian soldier, Col. Gardiner, who went down to his death on the field of Prestonpans; Dr. Watts, loved from childhood, singing "Hush, my dear; lie still, and slumber;" Doddridge, the refined and popular preacher, and the successful teacher; Whitefield, the Wesleys, and many others, pure in heart and great in faith.

In 1744, Lady Huntingdon met with her first great grief—the loss of two beautiful boys, George and Fernando, by small-pox; and two years later she was called upon to bury her husband, the love of her youth and the congenial companion of her riper years. Yet, in these heavy sorrows, her faith quailed not; she knew in

whom she had believed. Shortly after this, the marriage of Lady Margaret Hastings to Mr. Ingham, the Methodist preacher, brought the noble family into more familiar intercourse with the peculiar people whose influence was already beginning to be felt throughout the kingdom.

The earl's death having released Lady Huntingdon from many of the social duties which had heretofore occupied so much of her time, we find her now devoting her whole time, and all the energy which formed so remarkable a part of her character, to the advancement of the great revival of her day. Now we hear of her, with a large party, consisting of her daughters and sisters, spiritual-minded friends, and clergymen, jour-

neying through Wales, stopping at towns and villages: the preachers addressing the multitudes, and the ladies aiding the good work with books, and private exhortations, and visits of charity; and we can well imagine the effect produced among these simple-minded, warm-hearted mountaineers by such preaching as came from the faithful Griffith Jones or the earnest and powerful Howell Harris.

A short while after her return from Wales, the countess established herself in London, appointed George Whitefield her chaplain, and opened her stately mansions for the ministrations of the gospel; and we find the impassioned preacher as faithful in the portrayal of sin and in his ap-

peals to the guilty conscience in the splendors of Park Lane, and to an audience in which sat Chesterfield and Bolingbroke, as he had been in the streets of London, or in the forests of Georgia; and among the ladies who, forsaking the ranks of folly and fashion, became, through his instrumentality, shining lights in a dark age, we find such names as Ladies Frances Gardiner and Mary Hamilton, Lady Gertrude Hotham, the Countess Delitey, Lady Chesterfield, Lady Fanny Shirley, etc.

The London season being over, Lady Huntingdon, with the Ladies Hastings, retires to Ashly de la Zarch, one of the manors belonging to the earl's family; and here they are favored with visits from Dod-

dridge and Whitefield, and their daily life at this lovely Christian home reminds us of the days of the early Christians, when "they ate their meat, with gladness and singleness of heart praising God." A little later there are five men of God beneath her roof, and she writes to her aunt, Lady Fanny Shirley: "Several of our little circle have been wonderfully filled with the love of God, and have had joy unspeakable and full of glory. Dear Mr. Whitefield's sermons and conversation are close-searching, experimental, awful, and awakening. Surely, God is wonderfully with him."

Lady Huntingdon, accompanied by her chaplains and numerous friends, now made frequent summer tours, carrying the glad news of salvation

and making their presence everywhere a means of revival. Occasionally they would meet members of that grand band of itinerant preachers who, with lips touched as with live coals fresh from the altar, were bearing the gospel-message out into the highways and hedges of hitherto benighted England; and we can well picture the loving greetings between such men as Whitefield and Romaine, Newton, Ingham, and Grimshaw.

Working for her Master, living for his cause, devoted heart, hand, and purse to his service, still the domestic life of Lady Huntingdon was not without its heavy cares, and the chastening hand of her Father was sometimes laid upon her. In September, 1757, we see her called suddenly to

Brighton to receive the last breath of her fourth son, Hon. Henry Hastings, and, more mysterious and harder still, to hear that her eldest son, the earl, though uniformly respectful and kind to her, has fallen under the evil influence of Chesterfield and Bolingbroke, and is a stranger to his mother's God. During her visit to Brighton she became aware of a small society who, poor in worldly goods, but rich in faith, met in an upper room to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences. Determined to aid them, she sells her jewels, and with the proceeds erects a small but commodious house of worship, which was opened in 1760. This was the first one of Lady Huntingdon's chapels which, afterward,

became so numerous that they have been said to dot the soil of England.

In the beginning of 1757 Lady Huntingdon goes to Bristol to meet Mr. Wesley,* who returns with her to Bath, where he preaches at her own house; and in February we find her again in London, "in labors more abundant." During this year she was visited by one of her severest family afflictions, in the death of her lovely and pious daughter, Lady Selina Hastings, whose constant prayer during her illness was, "Jesus, teach

*Although, in the separation of Wesley and Whitefield, Lady Huntingdon sided with the latter in his peculiar views, still she always maintained the most friendly relations with Wesley, and the highest veneration for his character.

me; Jesus, cleanse me; Jesus, wash me;" and whose dying-words were, "I am happy, very, *very* happy." The grief of the mourner was lightened by the sympathy and affection of her brothers and sisters in that fellowship which is of Christ Jesus; and cast down, but not destroyed, she pursued her work and labors of love.

Although the labors of Wesley and Whitefield, with their little army of fellow-workers, were making themselves felt throughout England, still the opprobrium which had attached itself to them at Oxford still clung around any, at either university, who earned for themselves the despised name of Methodist; and in 1768 we see the extraordinary sight of six young men actually expelled from

Oxford for taking upon themselves to read, pray, and expound the Scriptures, and sing hymns, in private houses! This affair, coming to the notice of Lady Huntingdon, served to aid in bringing to maturity a plan, which already had been formed in her mind, for establishing a college exclusively for young men desiring to enter the ministry. After prayerful deliberation, and counsel with her best and wisest friends, the plan for the college was drawn up, and the place of its site chosen at Trevecka, in the parish of Talgarth, South Wales; Mr. Fletcher, of Madeley, was appointed president, and the Rev. Joseph Benson head master. Here pious young men might be trained for the ministry, unfettered

by any bias save their own religious convictions, being free, after their graduation, to enter the Established Church or any other Protestant denomination they might choose. The students were kept in active devotional exercises. Distances of twenty or thirty miles, on horseback or on foot, they would go to preach; and the college was soon blessed with tokens of Divine favor. Wide-spread revivals of religion followed the labors of teachers and pupils, and far and near the influence of these men of God was felt for good.

On the 30th September, 1770, one of the great lights of the world went out; and when it was announced that George Whitefield was no more, the tears and lamentations of the great

English nation, on both sides of the Atlantic, attested that a great man and a prince in Israel had fallen. By his will it was found that he had bequeathed his orphanage in Bethesda, together with all his possessions in the province of Georgia, to her whom, in the quaint language of the day, he designates "that lady elect, that mother in Israel, that mirror of true and undefiled religion, the Right Honorable Selina, Countess Dowager of Huntingdon," who, oppressed with her heavy cares at home and weighed down in spirit by the loss of her dear friend and faithful fellow-worker, appointed a day of special prayer throughout all her chapels for more of the spirit of holiness for ministers and people, and for herself more

128 HEROINES OF METHODISM.

strength and more simple and relying faith upon the arm of Jehovah. Refreshed and strengthened, with characteristic energy she set about her new labors. Making herself acquainted with the wants and necessities of her new field, she soon had plans made for increased usefulness for the orphan-house at Bethesda, and at a general meeting of all the ministers and students of her connection, at Trevecka, several missionaries were set apart, who soon set out to carry the gospel to the Indians in the New World. God, however, does not always answer our prayers or carry out our plans in the way we expect. The orphan-house was destroyed by fire; the breaking out of the Revolution soon after threw every thing into con-

fusion, and when the war closed it was found to be impossible to carry out the design. Yet no honest, sincere effort to glorify God and add to his kingdom ever goes without some great result, and eternity will show how much was accomplished by this instrumentality.

It is not to be supposed that in an age of spiritual darkness and bigotry Lady Huntingdon could carry on her great works unmolested and without persecution. Hitherto she had been protected by her high position, and believed that, as peeress of the realm of Great Britain, she had the right to employ her own chaplains upon her own premises. In this she was destined to be undeceived—an attack being made upon her chapels and

130 HEROINES OF METHODISM.

preachers, which, being carried to the tribunals of the Established Church, was decided against her. Next, carrying the matter to legal advice, she was again mortified and disappointed to find that she was driven to a (to her) painful extremity, which must expose her to invidious remark and open censure. Never faltering in what she knew to be the right path, and encouraged by the success of the Wesleys, and animated and sustained by the support and assistance of the counselors she most valued and esteemed, she authorized the ordination of the students of Trevecka on the plan of secession; and on the 9th of March, 1783, the first ordination of ministers in Lady Huntingdon's connection took place.

It is difficult for one born and bred in a republican country to understand exactly the relation Lady Huntingdon held to these ministers and these chapels—how, without detracting from her feminine retirement and womanly modesty, she could assume and maintain control over these men and these bodies. It is necessary for us to remember the rights and dignities of a peeress of the realm, and how, under certain circumstances, it became her duty to take her place before the world in maintaining the right and carrying on the work of her Lord and Master.

Now, having passed beyond her three-score years and ten, we find this extraordinary woman with no abatement of her powers and no di-

132 HEROINES OF METHODISM.

minution of her zeal and activity in the great cause to which she had devoted her life. During the last years of her life she passed the greater part of the time in London, with simple equipage and furniture, denying herself all the luxuries of life in order to support the gospel. Her eighty-fourth year drawing near, she felt that it was time to put her house in order. Carefully arranging all her business, providing for the carrying on of all her extensive charities, she calmly awaits the coming of the chariot-wheels of her Lord.

In the last utterances of the dying saint we find the triumphs of faith and love over the weakness and suffering of decaying nature. Coming from her chamber one morning, and

sinking into an easy-chair, she exclaims: "The Lord hath been present with my spirit this morning in a remarkable manner. What he means to convey to my soul I know not: it may be my approaching departure. My soul is filled with glory; I am as in the element of heaven itself."

Her last sickness began in November, and she lingered until June. Gently the silver cord was loosed—sweetly by the green pastures and still waters her departing soul was led. A few hours before the last struggle she whispered, with a smile, "I shall go to my Father to-night." And so, on the 19th of June, 1791, joyfully she went home. Her works do follow her!

MRS. ROGERS.

(HESTER ANN ROE.)



THE blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church;" and that Church of Christ which, in the latter part of the eighteenth century, was beginning to struggle into existence had its martyrs, ready, if need be, to die for the divine truths which it seemed to be its peculiar mission to propagate, and, harder still, ready to live and suffer in attestation of those glorious principles.

Although not called upon to shed her blood for the faith she professed,

in the early part of her life, Hester Ann Roe was as truly a martyr for the cause of Christ as if she had gone to the stake and the fagot bearing the name and the cross of Jesus of Nazareth. Her father was a clergyman of the Church of England, a man of strict morals, and, according to his lights, of real piety. In all her duties she was strictly trained and carefully taught to observe every jot and tittle of the moral law; even the diversions, so common in that day, of cards and dancing were denied her—novels and plays, especially, prohibited. Early in her childhood her religious feeling was remarkable, and she records instances of answers to prayer received at four years of age. Her father's death when she was nine

years old appears to have made a powerful impression upon her, causing her to seclude herself from her young companions in such a way as to excite their ridicule and scorn. Her mother, becoming uneasy at her prolonged melancholy, was prevailed upon to allow her to learn to dance, in order to raise her spirits, as well as to improve her manners and carriage. This, she affirms, was a fatal stab to all religious feeling; and she soon learned to delight in worldly pleasures.

At thirteen years of age she resolved to be confirmed, and, in the record of the doubts and fears which at that time harassed her, we are struck with the great precocity of both conscience and intellect mani-

fested by this young girl. She was fully convinced that it was her duty to attend the ordinance, yet she resolved to do so with great fear and trembling, believing that until persons were confirmed they were not responsible for their baptismal vows or accountable for their own conduct. She seems to have established a sort of compromise, and endeavored to enter upon that same system of soothing the conscience and cheating the Almighty which we too often see practiced at the present day. She humbled herself before God, fasted and prayed, made good resolutions against anger, pride, and disobedience—still could not believe there was sin in dancing, cards, or play-going; in short, she went through the vain, oft-

repeated, never-succeeding struggle of trying to serve two masters.

At the age of fourteen she was, by a long and severe illness, brought near the gates of death. This, together with an alarming dream, made a great impression upon her; and it is piteous to read the accounts of her little schemes and devices to build up her own salvation and to watch her unavailing struggles after rest and peace. Her Master and Friend was too merciful to allow her to drink from these broken cisterns when near at hand was an immortal fountain, full of the water of life; so one by one we find her schemes and plans prove ineffectual, and still the search goes on. For a time she quieted her conscience by the blamelessness of

her life, and stilled the inward monitor by joining in all the gayeties and pleasures of the fashionable world. From all accounts we gather that she was beautiful, fascinating, and much sought in society—her position in life, too, giving her free access to any circles she chose to enter; so that to her the world was indeed an alluring place.

In 1773, at the age of seventeen, while spending the summer with her rich and fashionable god-mother at the gay town of Adkington, she heard that her uncle, Mr. Roe, had recommended as curate at Macclesfield, her home, a clergyman who was said to be a Methodist. The name conveyed to her mind ideas the most unpleasant. The Methodists, she believed,

concealed every vice under a mask of piety; they deceived the ignorant, led astray the credulous, and imposed upon the weak; and, worst of all, they preached against her pet diversions, which, long ago, she had resolved were harmless. To use her own words: "Being told what arguments he made use of, I revolved them in my mind, fully determined if I found, upon reflection, I could answer them I would. I first considered if any Scripture example could be brought. I remembered to have read of Miriam's dancing; but it was to express her pious joy to the Lord and as an act of worship, accompanied by a hymn of praise. David danced, also, but it was in like manner and from like motives. Herod's

daughter danced, but she was a heathen, and the cause of beheading a servant of God. Nothing, therefore, which I found in Scripture countenanced dancing in any measure. I then began to think of the objections urged against it. One of these was that as it tends to levity and trifling mirth, so it enervates the mind, dissipates the thoughts, weakens, if not stifles, serious and good impressions, and quite indisposes the mind for prayer. I asked my own heart, Is not this a truth? Conscience answered in the affirmative. Mr. Simpson (the clergyman) pleads, farther, What good is promoted hereby? I would gladly have had it to urge, It promotes health; but many instances of those who had lost health, and

even life, within my own knowledge, through attending this very diversion would not permit this. Again, he pleads, Are you made better Christians, better husbands, better children hereby? Better Christians I was conscious none could be for having the mind dissipated and unfitted for prayer. Some husbands I knew who were not made better, and some wives who, to support extravagant dress on such occasions, had greatly injured their families. For my own part, I was conscious it had led me to dress and to expenses not suited to my present situation in life. These thoughts brought powerful convictions to my mind, notwithstanding my desire to resist them. I could not deny that truth, in particular,

that those who habitually attend such pleasure lose all relish for spiritual things: God is shut out of their thoughts and hearts; prayer, if they use any, is full of wanderings, or perhaps wholly neglected, and death put as far as possible out of sight, lest the thought should spoil their pleasure. I was conscious, beyond a doubt, these were the fruits this delusive pleasure had wrought in my own soul; and, comparing my present state of mind with what it was before I entered upon this diversion, so mistakenly called innocent, I found cause to be deeply ashamed. ‘But, then, if this is really true,’ said I to myself, ‘I ought not to follow this amusement any longer. And can I give it up?’ My vile heart replied,

‘I cannot, I will not.’ The Spirit of God whispered, ‘Will you, then, indulge in what you know to be sin?’ My conflict was great, yet I resolved to run all hazards rather than give up this pleasure; therefore, I stifled these convictions with all my might, and after this ran more eagerly than ever into all pleasurable follies.”

About this time she witnessed the joyful death of a servant of God, and was overwhelmed with the thought that for her there was no hope of happiness beyond the grave. At times she would be so deeply affected by Mr. Simpson’s sermons that she would come weeping out of the church; and yet so great was her fear of being called a Methodist that she would even ridicule the sermon which

had so affected her. Sometimes her convictions would be so acute that she would even resolve to give up dancing, until, overpersuaded by gay companions, she would return to the ensnaring pleasure.

About the 1st of January, 1774, she was so deeply impressed by Mr. Simpson's sermons, especially by one on "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" that she felt she must experience a change of heart or perish forever. Still another weight oppressed her: she was greatly attached to a young man who, though moral, was not a follower of Jesus. The command, "Only in the Lord," rang in her ears, and she felt, if she took God for her portion, this was part of

the perfect sacrifice required of her. It was too much! So, with a bleeding conscience, she returned once more to the beggarly elements of the world; and at the last ball she ever attended she danced all night, and never sat down until four o'clock in the morning.

On the Sunday before Easter, Mr. Simpson preached from St. John vi. 44. Under this sermon her convictions of sin were redoubled: the agonies of her guilty conscience became insupportable, and, without shame or fear of the world, she wept and cried for mercy, went home, fell upon her knees, and made a solemn vow to forsake all trifling companions and sinful pleasures. For days her anguish continued, until where, approaching

the Lord's-table, the minister read the sentence, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins," a ray of light broke upon her darkened soul, and in a measure she was enabled to rejoice in God her Saviour. This peace, however, lasted only for a season: she was persuaded by others that she was presumptuous, had deceived herself, etc., so that her joy was soon exchanged for heaviness.

It had never yet been her privilege to hear the Methodists, nor, indeed, had she lost any of her prejudice against them, but a neighbor, who had recently through their instrumentality found peace in believing, strongly advised her to go to one of

their meetings. She resolved to go privately, and accordingly went one morning to one of the meetings which these primitive people were accustomed to hold at the dawn of day. The text preached from by Mr. Samuel Bardsley was, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God." Every word seemed directed to her sin-sick soul; the preacher spoke as if he knew the workings of her aching heart, and clearly pointed sinners such as she knew herself to be to Jesus crucified. Greatly comforted, her prejudices were entirely removed, and she felt that with this people was the way of salvation for her.

Now, fresh and terrible difficulties arose in her path. Her mother, hearing of her visits to the Methodist

place of worship, was ready to disown her; friends and acquaintances turned against her; but, crying, "Lord, I will forsake all, and follow thee," she resolved, at all hazards, to go where she could find light, warmth, and food for her darkened, perishing, hungry soul. . Ah! right royally does our King repay us for sacrifices made for him; lavishly does he bestow his good gifts upon those who forsake all for his cause; and, standing alone, with a flood-gate of dire persecution opened upon her, this young girl at last found joy and peace far beyond any thing she could have conceived of happiness on earth. Humble and docile, full of filial piety, she yet firmly told her mother that she must seek the salvation of her soul at all

150 HEROINES OF METHODISM.

costs, and finally told her she had determined to leave her house, and become a servant, rather than be hindered from seeking the Methodists—at the same time, telling her she would greatly prefer remaining at home, and besought her mother to allow her to give up her place in her household and let her become the servant where, heretofore, she had been the cherished and petted child. After consultation with her friends, her mother agreed to this proposal, they all thinking that Hester would soon grow weary of her enthusiasm, and that, delicately nurtured as she had been, her strength would soon fail under her unaccustomed labors—not knowing that she entered not upon her toils in her own strength,

but relying on the omnipotent arm of Him whose strength is promised day by day, or that she gloried in her tribulation, knowing that they also are counted blessed who endure.

Not long after she began her menial occupations, the God in whom she had trusted drew very near, and her cup of bliss was filled to overflowing.

About seven months after she began her servile labors her mother was taken very ill, and when just recovering had a relapse, which very nearly proved fatal. For almost six weeks Hester sat up with her every other night, the fatigue of which, added to her severe and unwonted household labors, and the rigorous fastings which she observed, told

upon her bodily health to such a degree that the doctor who was attending her mother remonstrated with her friends, and insisted that she should not go on sacrificing her life. She having proved that her zeal was no fanatical outburst, but a steadfast principle within, her mother resolved to give up the contest—a servant was procured, and she was in some measure reinstated in her place as the daughter of the house. The kind interference of the good physician, however, though in time to prevent fatal results, was too late to prevent all evil consequences, and her health never entirely recovered from the injury it then received; indeed, she was brought by disease so low as at one time to have been persuaded that

her hour was at hand. With rapturous joy she looked for the coming of her Lord, and keen was her disappointment to find his time was not yet. After a sharp struggle with the spirit of rebellion, she gained the victory, and was ready to live or die as Christ should will. It now became her high privilege to enjoy unclouded communion with God, to bask always in the sunbeams of his presence, and to have that perfect love which casteth out fear. Never again did a doubt or shadow come across her radiant way.

In April, 1776, she met, for the first time, Mr. Wesley, who greatly encouraged and sustained her by his parental tenderness and godly counsel; and to the end of his life the

friendship between them was unbroken. About two years later there occurred a remarkable incident in her life. While at church at Macclesfield an awful earthquake shook the ground to its foundations: The church rocked like a cradle, and nearly threw some of the kneeling congregation upon their faces. The scene was terrible: some fainted and were trampled under foot by the affrighted crowd, numbers flew to the doors shrieking and crying for mercy, and many never recovered from the effects of the fright. In the midst of the wild confusion and tumult which reigned on all sides the soul of this young girl was unmoved; steadfastly planted upon the Rock of Ages, she exhorted those around her

to be still and know that God is the Lord. Many were awakened and convicted of sin; many, that day, sought and found their long-neglected God. Though her health continued feeble, she had gained strength enough to visit among the poor, and she enjoyed many sweet seasons of blessing among these humble children of her Father; and though her relatives and friends continued their persecution, that of her mother had now ceased altogether, and, to her unspeakable delight, she was now allowed to attend, unmolested, the preaching of the Methodists whenever she had the opportunity.

In 1781 Miss Roe met, for the first time, Mr. Rogers, the Methodist minister, whose devoted wife she after-

ward became, and whose ministrations at the bedside of her dying uncle were greatly blessed. For the next three years she seems to have led a life comparatively free from all persecution. She records, with joy and thanksgiving, the tender affection shown to her by her mother, and the withdrawal of all persecution by her near relatives, some of whom, indeed, had become partakers of like precious faith and hope with herself.

On the 19th of August, 1784, Hester Ann Roe was married to Mr. Rogers, and within a fortnight after their marriage left for Dublin, their appointed field of labor, where their work was soon blessed with a glorious revival, in which scores and hundreds were brought to Christ.

They remained in Dublin five years, and then returned to England to Conference, and received their appointment to Cork. Here, again, they were blessed with an outpouring of the Spirit of God, and greatly encouraged by seeing the work of the Lord prosper in their hands. Mrs. Rogers was now visited again with severe affliction. Laid low herself with nervous fever, her husband oppressed with grief and the cares of nursing, very ill, and her infant dying—through it all she was enabled, by grace, to say, “Good is the will of the Lord.”

Their next appointment was to London, upon which vast field they entered with fear and trembling, but sustained by an unfaltering trust in

Him who had promised to be with them always. The trials of Mr. Rogers, in his new field, were great and peculiar, but through them all he found his wife a helpmeet given unto him of the Lord; and so well did he acquit himself in his trying relationship that he received a unanimous vote of thanks from the Conference, for his exertions and for his immovable patience and fortitude in defense of Methodism. Mrs. Rogers found her duties largely increased in London. Besides having charge of Mr. Wesley's household as well as her own, she for two years discharged with great acceptability the office of housekeeper at the City Road, and was also put in charge of two large classes; for the great founder of

Methodism would have no drones in his hive, but to each one, man or woman, was a special duty assigned, and "Diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," was the motto of all. During this time she greatly enjoyed meeting many persons of congenial spirit, and it was her privilege to count among her personal friends such men as Mr. Bardsdale, Mr. Blair, Mr. Fletcher, John and Charles Wesley, etc.; and especially was she honored in having been among those who ministered to John Wesley in his last hours, having even been in the chamber where the good man met his fate; and she declares that they were then almost in the visible presence of the Most High.


160 HEROINES OF METHODISM.

For the next few years Mr. and Mrs. Rogers were constantly changed from place to place, as the work seemed to demand. The health of Mrs. Rogers—never very strong, and much impaired during the trials of her early life—began visibly to fail, but, leaning on the bosom of Christ, her Beloved, she felt no alarms. On the 10th of October, 1794, while suffering very greatly, she took Mr. Rogers by the hand, and said: “My dear, the Lord has been very kind to us. O he is good—indeed he is good!” and later, after a severe paroxysm of pain, she laid her head on her husband’s bosom and calmly said, “I am going;” then, in broken utterances, as long as she was able, she testified to the faithfulness of her

Lord in her dying-hour. The glory of God, which had shone upon the opening flower of her youth, and ripened to fruit in the good works of her mature years, now shed full rays of radiant luster on the declining hours of her earthly career; and, in the thirty-ninth year of her age, she passed from earth to heaven, glad with the glorious anticipations of the reward promised to those who through great tribulation enter into the kingdom.



LADY MAXWELL.

HRISTIAN biography has this advantage over every other, that it teaches us not only how to live, but how to die. Other biography has reference to time only, but religious biography to eternity; therefore, as much as the latter outweighs in importance the former, so does Christian biography all other.

The trite quotation, "The proper study of mankind is *man*," is most emphatically true in its most comprehensive sense—viz.: *man*, physically, mentally, morally, but, above

all, *spiritually*; profitable, indeed, in this latter sense, to one who would "follow on to know the Lord"—follow them, as they have followed Christ, who have walked in his steps, by his counsels, and with his light shining upon the way of their pilgrimage through this world to a better. Profitable, indeed, is the study of "the man of God, perfect and thoroughly furnished unto every good work," or that of those "holy women" who, in every age of the Church, have been his helpers. How much in their lives "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness!" It is greatly desirable, and our duty, not less than our privilege, that we be no longer babes in Christ; that, by the example of one

164 HEROINES OF METHODISM.

of ourselves, a frail earthen vessel as we, cast in the very same mold of clay, liable to the same assaults of Satan, tempted, tried, and troubled in the same way, yet by the same means—faith and prayer—as much at our command as theirs, arriving at last at *the rest* of faith, gaining “the moral Pisgah in life’s wilderness,” where faith is lost in sight, we may be incited, encouraged, strengthened, and sustained, till we, too, have arrived where

Not a cloud shall arise to darken our skies,
Or hide for a moment our Lord from our eyes.

No religious biography with which we are acquainted is more calculated to lead the thoughts from time to eternity, to spiritualize the mind, consecrate the affections, purify our

motives, elevate our aims, and direct our energies into their right channel, the good of man and the glory of God, than the life of that sainted woman, that elect lady, that pioneer of aggressive Christianity, Lady Maxwell. Her maiden name was Darcy Brisbane. She was the youngest daughter of Thomas Brisbane, of the county of Ayr. In her childhood there were not any developments of unusual piety. She was, however, always of a most humane and generous disposition, loving ever to do good to others; but there was in her early life no higher motive for these good actions than a purely selfish gratification, if we may so speak. She did good because it was a satisfaction for her so to do; and it is so

amiable, so pleasurable to do good, even for its own sake, that parents should train their children to the *habit* of generosity, as a source of satisfaction to themselves, if for nothing else. But this *habit* of giving, sublimated by divine grace, makes afterward the liberal Christian, giving but increasing, gathering yet scattering abroad, one of those who will most efficiently aid the Church in all her benevolent enterprises, and thus hasten the coming of our Lord's kingdom; so that none should despise these lesser graces, but encourage them as the beginnings of higher good. They were so, we shall see, in the life before us. Miss Brisbane received her elementary education under the parental roof. When it was matured

in Edinburgh, she was taken to London for the purpose of being presented at court. Her residence with her aunt, the Marchioness of Lothian, of course introduced her into the first circles of rank and fashion. A singular incident occurred during her visit to London. Walking, one day, in the garden of her uncle, the gardener, encouraged by her serious, interesting appearance, came up to her, and, with all humility, stated the deep distress of soul under which he then labored in consequence of sin, and, in effect, inquired of her, "What must I do to be saved?" The young lady, touched by his distress, gave him such advice as led him to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. She was then only sixteen

years of age, and thus, before experiencing the grace of God herself, she commenced her ministry of salvation to others; in this respect we have the example of Wesley, Scott, Chalmers, and other eminent divines, who could theorize for others without having practically themselves arrived at the knowledge of the truth.

Soon after her return from London she was married to Sir Walter Maxwell, Bart., of Pollock, of the noble family of Nithsdale. Her biographer, Mr. Lancaster, refers us to Douglas's peerage for the antiquity and grandeur of the illustrious name of Maxwell, but this we would only advert to as bearing upon the fact of the subject of this memoir bringing all her honors to the feet of Jesus, as

the humblest of his disciples. This union, desirable in every respect, filling her heart with worldly hopes and aspirations, was of short continuance. In a little more than two years she was deprived by death of both her husband and only child, a son. At nineteen years a widow, and childless, her springs of earthly joy were dried up at their source. She turned to the perennial fountain opened in the house of David. She drank of the living stream, and never thirsted for draught of earthly bliss again. Henceforward for happiness she went to the only sure and unfailing source. Young, beautiful, rich, honorable, the world, nevertheless, contained no lure for her. Living above it, while in it, she viewed it but as a disciplin-

ary school, a trial-place, a sphere of duty, to fit and prepare her soul for its inheritance with the saints in light. To her conversion, closely associated with her bereavements, she adverted, if at all, with brevity and apparent reluctance, only in reference, saying, "God brought me to himself by afflictions." From the date of her great life-time sorrow she wore earth as a loose garment. She was very young, a widow; perhaps to this was owing a certain reserve of manner, complained of by some, but, no doubt, assumed as a protection from familiarity; she, moreover, set great value on time—she wished it for devotion, and for her numerous works of charity. This, also, besides a natural dignity of carriage and

character, may extenuate what some accounted her blemish.

Lady Huntingdon, the contemporary of Lady Maxwell, and co-worker in the Master's vineyard, is more generally known than the latter. Lady Maxwell, as a mourning widow, sought retirement. Such public exhibitions of piety as were proper in Lady Huntingdon would not have been proper in her. Then, Lady Maxwell was an Arminian. She sided with Wesley, and not with Whitefield, and her friends, Ladies Huntingdon, Glenorchy, and others. The *writers* most familiar with the two eminently pious women have been mostly Calvinists; of course, Lady Huntingdon would be naturally brought more often on the carpet.

She deserves richly that her praise should be in all the Churches, but not less so does Lady Maxwell, who is comparatively little known.

It was during the early period of her bereavement, consequently in her prime of life, that Lady Maxwell became acquainted with that part of the Church of Christ with which she became associated, and of which she was so eminently useful a member, till united to the Church of the first-born in heaven. She became acquainted with Mr. Wesley in 1764. He was one of her few 'correspondents. A few passages from a letter of his will tend to throw farther light on her character:

“I think God has taken unusual pains, so to speak, to make you a

Christian—a Christian indeed (not in name), worshiping God in spirit and in truth; having in you the mind that was in Christ, and walking as Christ also walked. He has given you affliction upon affliction. He has used every possible means to unhinge your soul from the things of earth, that it might fix on him alone. Look, look up to him, and be thou saved! He is not a God afar off. He is now hovering over you, with eyes of tenderness and love. Only believe. Then, he turns your heaviness into joy. Do not think you are not humble enough, not contrite enough, not earnest enough. You are nothing, but Christ is all. And he is yours. The Lord write it upon your heart, and take you for a habitation of God

through the Spirit! O that you may be ever as dead to the world as you are now! I apprehend the greatest danger from that quarter. If you should be induced to seek happiness out of Christ, how soon would your good desires vanish! especially if you should give way to the temptations to which your person, your youth, and your fortune will not fail to expose you. If you escape this snare, I trust you will be a real Christian, having the power as well as the form of religion. I expect you will then have, likewise, better health and spirits. Perhaps to-morrow—but O take Christ to-day! I long to have you happy in him.”

Lady Maxwell had been brought up in the Established Church of Scot-

land, which by many sacred associations was, no doubt, peculiarly endeared to her. Though *providentially*, she firmly believed, called to unite herself with the then so-called Methodist Societies, *that* in no wise diminished her affection for the true and noble Church of her country and her ancestry. For *her*, after mature deliberation, she deemed it best to be a Methodist. We must here be allowed the privilege of quoting from Mr. Wesley's letter to her on the subject of her Church-membership:

“It gives me pleasure, indeed, to hear that God has given you resolution to join the Society. Undoubtedly, you will suffer reproach on that account, but it is the reproach of Christ. And you will have large

amends when the Spirit of glory and of God shall rest upon you. Yet, I foresee a danger: at first, you will be inclined to think that *all* members of the Society are in earnest, and when you find that *some* are otherwise (which will always be the case in so large a body of people), prejudice may easily steal in, and exceedingly weaken your soul. O beware of this rock of offense! When you *see* any thing amiss (on hearsay you will not readily receive it), remember our Lord's words, 'What is that to thee? follow thou me;' and, I entreat you, do not regard the half-Methodists (if we must use the name). Do not mind them who endeavor to hold Christ in one hand and the world in the other. May I not take upon me

to give you one advice more? Be very wary how you contract new acquaintance. All, even sincere, people will not profit *you*. I should be pained at your conversing frequently with any but those who are of a deeply serious spirit, and who speak closely to the point. You need not condemn *them*, and yet you may say, ‘This will not do for *me*.’”

Lady Maxwell had joined the Society as a means of grace; as yet she had not received peace in believing. Mr. Wesley feared she was in some measure depending on her own works for acceptance with God. To this danger he was ever sensibly alive. He thus cautions her:

“I am not afraid you should be satisfied with less than *this* (entire sanc-

tification), but I am afraid of your seeking it the wrong way. Here is the danger—that you may seek it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law; and thus you may be retarded in receiving the blessing. Christ has died for *you*; he has bought pardon for *you*. Why should you not receive it *now*, while you have this paper in your hand? Because you have not done thus, or thus? See your own works! Because you are not thus, and thus? See your own righteousness! O let it all go! None but Christ! None but Christ! See, all things are ready! Do not wait for this or that preparation—for something to *bring* to God. Bring Christ, or, rather, let him bring you—bring you home to God. Lord

Jesus, take her! Take her and all her sins. Sprinkle her with thy blood! Let her sink down into the arms of thy love, and cry out, My Lord and my God!"

For one reason, among others, we are particular in quoting the words of Wesley in his religious teachings of Lady Maxwell, that they may disprove the charge of the Arminianism he taught having any leaning to works for justification of the sinner before God.

But now occurred the most momentous epoch in the life of Lady Maxwell—the period of her conversion. After many agonizing struggles, strong cries, and prayers for redemption, she was brought to receive Christ crucified, with child-like faith;

180 HEROINES OF METHODISM.

then "the day-spring from on high" broke upon her who had so long sat "in the region and shadow of death." We quote from her diary:

"My peace began to flow as a river. I was astonished—knew not what to make of it, and was afraid of delusion. Having been so long inured to distress, I started back at joy, and thought it could not be for me. I prayed God that if this happy change were wrought by him it might continue, and I be enabled to walk worthy of it; but if from the enemy, it might be taken away, as I would rather choose sorrow from God than be allowed to deceive myself. Still it continued. I was afraid to go to rest, lest I should lose the enjoyment, and all that day I cannot express

what I felt. All condemnation was removed, and I could not help believing, being so sweetly constrained to it. I was much inclined to silence, meditation, and prayer. A sense of Divine love preserved in me a calm composure of spirit; it seemed all ‘a sacred awe that dares not move.’ . . . The Lord gave me his Spirit to witness with mine. I felt it clear, full, and satisfactory, far beyond all human evidence.”

How sweetly this “conversion work” in her, as a quaint writer expresses it, tallies with the experience of every new-born soul! Ah! would that the subsequent experience of all those regenerated by grace ran parallel with that of the devout subject of this memoir in her future Chris-

182 HEROINES OF METHODISM.

tian course, for her light increased with increasing years, shining more and more unto the perfect day. Her views concerning the extent of gospel salvation—that there are degrees of it, a gradual, even sometimes a sudden, maturity of holiness, not deferred necessarily to the hour and article of death, but, according to the believer's realizing faith, free for him as well at one time as another—were peculiar, nominally, at that day as this, to the sect to which she had attached herself. We say nominally, for this great religious truth, though often denied theoretically, is, thank God, practically confirmed by the life and conversation of many of God's people in every branch of his Church. Sanctification, or the Christian's ma-

turity in Divine grace, otherwise called Christian perfection, she now, after much hungering and thirsting after righteousness, obtained, to the increased joy and comfort of her soul. She said from this period "her experience ran in a deeper channel." Sweet, and high, and holy was the communion which she now enjoyed with her triune God. To herself even there was something awful in the manifestations to her soul of the Godhead's glory. Almost she wished, as she expected, "the vessel to break" with the bestowment of such full and glorious communications of Heaven to her soul. We will not call these separate and distinct manifestations of the Godhead to her soul, as she believed them to be, enthusiasm, un-

til we have arrived at the same degree of grace as herself, for we who see not with the same eye of faith, who occupy not the same mount of vision, who have to stand here while she goes yonder, cannot presume to say what God has in reserve, even here, for them that love him with soul, mind, and strength, as did this devout disciple, Lady Maxwell. Self she had completely abnegated. She had long since said :

Vain, delusive world, adieu,
With all of creature good.

And this was the sentiment of her heart when the world held out for her prospects the most inviting. She might have formed an alliance with the noblest families of the kingdom, and, we are informed, had many so-

licitations to this effect, but she preferred to remain a widow indeed—desolate, yet trusting in God. She brought time, talents, wealth, position, youth, beauty, to the altar of sacrifice. She gave all to God, and no one serves him for naught: so he gave her in rich return grace abundant, in good measure, pressed down and running over. She was an incessant laborer in his vineyard, instrumental in bringing many souls to a personal knowledge of Christ. One of the most prominent of these was Lady Hope, who left so much of her property for charitable and pious purposes, and to perpetuate whose memory Lady Maxwell afterward named “Hope Chapel.” Being made by the will of Lady Glenorchy, who had

made up the trio of this Christian friendship, her sole executrix, and appointed principal manager of her numerous chapels, Lady Maxwell's labors for the Lord, great as they had been in youth, increased as she advanced in years, and as her means of usefulness were providentially enlarged. We might, as some excuse for our own lukewarmness, be possibly led to consider her peculiar circumstances as exclusively favorable to entire consecration and deep devotion of soul. Yet, now that she was drawn by the most enlarged and active round of charities, necessarily drawn from her beloved retirement, the devotional element was still paramount. Her religious diary, continued through all the years of her

Christian pilgrimage, is rich with the most profound teachings of Christian experience. One unbroken testimony it bears to the efficacy of the grace of God for every necessity of her soul. Very faithful was she in probing her heart, and bringing its every motive to the touchstone of scriptural truth. To Christians of every denomination her diary would make a valuable *vade mecum*, every phase of religious life being there faithfully and clearly portrayed. As a writer has said, "She applied the spiritual barometer to her soul"—was advised of, and warned or encouraged by, all its fluctuations of temperature.

Lady Maxwell's life is a great argument against conventional seclusion being necessary to the develop-

ment of exalted devotional feeling. No immured saint ever excelled this active, social Christian in rapt and sublime devotion. True, she preferred in-door work for God; her taste was retirement, but her spirituality suffered no loss when she was called to an active business life of out-door duties. In reference to these her biographer thus writes:

“There was scarcely a humane institution, or a private or public charity, whether for the repose of age or the instruction of youth, the relief of indigence or the help of sickness, for the reformation of morals or the spread and support of religion, from which she did not receive applications, and to which she did not contribute. Among her other charities,

she erected and supported a school in which, at the time of her death, about eight hundred children received a good education, and, on their leaving it, were each presented with a copy of the Holy Scriptures. Such were the encouraging effects produced by this institution as induced her ladyship to provide for its continuance to the end of time. As she was prepared for every good work, not only by her income, but by retrenchment of her own personal expenses, the subject of her charities is almost an endless one. Could the dead speak, the poor she helped, the sick she relieved, the orphans protected, and the friendless assisted, embarrassed honest tradesmen that she raised above difficulty, modest merit which

190 HEROINES OF METHODISM.

she brought into notice, the youth whom she instructed and set out in the world—could these speak—an army would arise to bless her memory. As the poet said of another,

*“Her portioned maids, apprenticed orphans
 blest,
The young who labor, and the old who
 rest.”*

It will be seen Lady Maxwell was no common character, but one greatly eminent by gifts and grace, one of those “honorable women” that the Scriptures note, one of those who deem that “mercy becomes a monarch better than his crown,” and who think it no condescension in those of high estate to be associated in Church or Christian fellowship with the poor of this world, rich in faith; she was

content to risk the loss of caste in the casting in her lot with the obscure followers of her Lord, for she considered the reproach of Christ her chief honor. She had great independence of character—of Christian character. Duty was her watch-word, and under the most disadvantageous circumstances she was “bold to take up, firm to sustain, the consecrated cross.” She was indeed a noble woman—noble by hereditary right, and noble by character, address, and person; tall, commanding, awing by her dignity, yet alluring by her suavity and grace. Even to her seventieth year, her biographer tells us, time had written no furrows on her brow, nor impaired her sight, nor detracted from her ease and grace of manner.

192 HEROINES OF METHODISM.

Of eminent conversational powers, wielding a ready and vigorous pen, extensively acquainted with British literature, perfectly at home on every subject of rational interest, yet in every company piety was her favorite theme ; so that, indeed, it seemed as if

Truths divine came mended from her tongue.

There is a recent advertisement of a forthcoming volume entitled, "The Excellent Women of the Methodist Church in Great Britain and America." It is desirable that Lady Maxwell have a prominent place in the picture. She is too little known to the Christian world. Her life should preach more extensively than it does. Called by the same name (Maxwell), and born in the same locality with her

(Dumfriesshire, Scotland); brought up, also, as herself, a Presbyterian; like her, also, not loving Presbyterianism less, but Methodism more—it is natural that the writer of this sketch should have taken more than common interest in her character, and given it careful study. Yet the pious and candid reader of it, without any such reasons for partial scrutiny, will arise from the perusal impressed with the belief that he has been made acquainted with one only a little lower than the angels, and, in fact, that angels have indeed walked the earth.

The death of Lady Maxwell was in beautiful conformity with her life. As she had lived well, so she died well. Her last end was that of the righteous—peace; in her own dying-

words, "Peace, inexpressibly sweet." Her friend, the Hon. Miss Napier, thus writes: "Her life and death are lessons which I trust I shall never forget. O such a death-bed! It appeared like the verge of heaven, a place which the presence of God rendered sacred."

LADY MAXWELL.

How firm thy faith, and hope, and love,
 Pure saint! so joined unto thy God
 That thou in heaven didst live and move,
 Even while the earth was thy abode.

As thou didst follow Christ the Lord,
 Blest spirit, may I follow thee!
 And be each luring wile abhorred
 That might a let or hind'rance be.

O grant me, Lord, that I may be
 As perfect in my works and ways;
 From sin and vanity as free,
 As rich in godliness and grace;

That I my course may run with joy,
Till when my days on earth are o'er,
Then let me join thy saint on high,
To praise thy name forevermore.



GRACE MURRAY.



METHODISM, as early Christianity, owes much to its women. There were not only *men* in those days, but *women*, also—women of firm resolve, of unconquerable will, “bold to take up, firm to sustain, the consecrated cross.”

Women's courage seems to be for emergencies. The religious movement of the eighteenth century, known as Methodism, was one of these. The same feeble, fragile being who when seas are smooth and winds fair, and the sun shining

brightly in the heavens, is all softness and timidity, when the winds blow, and the sea swells, and the storm thickens, rouses herself to do and dare, with a man's heart, and, nerved by her excitement, sometimes with the strength of a man's arm. In the apostolic times, honorable and grateful mention is made of the women helpers in the Lord. The martyr host numbers, among these, women who braved the fagot and the stake; and Methodism—adherence to which, in its introduction, involved often loss of caste, and persecution, not only from the world, but from one's own household—can name not only men, but women, who esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of the world, and

who "chose rather to suffer afflictions with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." True, as with the disciples in the early Church, many of the early Methodists, with unguided zeal, *sought* martyrdom. They often, by their own imprudence, caused their good to be evil spoken of, and while "harmless as doves," they were not always "wise as serpents." They too often "cast their pearls before" those who they knew would assuredly "turn again and rend them." Like one of Scott's characters, they *would* "testify" and bandy *words*, when their only answer should have been "a blameless life." Duty can never conflict with duty; but, then, it is a nice thing to discriminate between what

is duty and what is not. That our Methodist martyrs did not always properly discriminate we must ascribe to the fault of their judgment, and not to that of their religion. We, in our day, are in little danger of erring through excessive zeal. The example of those who sometimes did can, certainly, do us no harm, while there is much in their devoted lives to do us positive good, as inciting to more activity and self-sacrifice in Christ's service. *They* kept nothing back, but made a full surrender of all they had and were to Christ. No Babylonish garment upon *their* person or wedge of gold within *their* tent. *Their* sacrifice was complete. Our danger, as Christians, is apathy; we need rousing—we need some of

that flaming zeal that made those Christians of the olden time such burning and shining lights in the Church of God. O may their recorded example stimulate us to greater exertions for the cause that surely should lie as near to our hearts as it did to theirs! While avoiding their few errors, let us imitate their thousand virtues. How little we do compared to them, in labors most abundant! O to be up and doing for the cause, early and late, as were they! Lord, help us, while reviewing their history, to follow them as they followed Christ—near, and not afar off, through evil report as well as good report! They “steered no middle course.” Religion was all to them, or nothing. God

and mammon they attempted not to serve. They knew there was no blending the Church and the world; these never coalesced, and never will; and that if we would have a living Church her members must be her living stones, their holy and devoted lives attested that they appreciated in full significance. If we would have those pristine days return to the Church, when all her children's life was prayer and praise, then must we inaugurate them again, even *now*. We, the men and women of the present, after the same spirit, if not strictly after the same manner, must worship the God of our fathers. O *are* we

Traveling home to God
In the way the fathers trod?

There is none other but that "strait

and narrow way." How *she* whose name heads this dim portraiture walked in it, turning in her youth from "the broad way and the green," let us learn from her life's lesson. Her maiden name was Norman, her place of nativity Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England. Religious impressions were received by her at a very early age. Her convictions of sin then never left her till, in after years, God, for Christ's sake, gave her the assurance that he had forgiven them all. Her being sent to dancing-school, she says, first led her mind away for a time from the serious considerations of eternity. She always, after becoming a confirmed Christian, disapproved of dancing, which, though it may be no sin in itself, naturally

leads the way to many others. About the age of twenty-one she married Alexander Murray, of a highly respectable family, but which, being concerned in the rebellion of 1715, became impoverished, so that the husband of Mrs. Murray, as a means of support, turned his attention to a sea-faring life. At the time of their marriage, neither husband nor wife cared for religion. Having thrown off her early piety, Mrs. Murray, who was the admiration and delight of gay and fashionable society, entered into its enjoyments with all the zest and enthusiasm which afterward she gave to nobler and better things. The gay world could illy afford to lose one so attractive as Grace Murray. She is represented as having

been very beautiful, sprightly, and animated, and possessed of fine musical taste and talent, the modulations of her voice being of exceeding sweetness and of great compass. The providence of God, in a peculiar manner, interposed to draw her from the gay world's unsatisfying pleasures, by the following means, related in nearly her own words:

“Mr. M., being ill at Portsmouth, sent for me. I went, and took with me my child, which was about fourteen months old. We boarded at the house of a widow lady, who had two daughters. Twice every day she passed by my room, with her book under her arm and her daughters with her, to retire into her chamber to prayers. This struck me in such

a manner that I, too, wished to pray. O the goodness of God, who brought me hither to be taught to pray! Yes, I began to pray in the spirit in that house. The Lord had fastened something on my mind there that I could never shake off."

Under these impressions she returned with her husband to London, where, through succeeding influences providentially brought to bear upon her awakened conscience, she was finally brought to a knowledge of her sins forgiven; but again we give her own words, as they also inform us of things connected with the rise and progress of Methodism:

"When we returned to London, all places rang with the fame of Mr. Whitefield, who had introduced the

practice of field-preaching. I said, 'Poor gentleman! he is out of his mind,' so foolish was I, and ignorant. But he continued to blow the gospel-trumpet all around London. At last I had a strong desire to hear him, but my husband would not give his consent. It was not long before Mr. M. was called to his occupation, and just after his departure my child sickened, and God was pleased to take her unto himself. After the child was interred I was brought into such lowness of spirits I could rest in no place. I lost my relish for all worldly pleasures, and though I was taken from place to place, to divert me, it was to no purpose. I wanted, but I knew not what; I could rest in no place. The Lord had made the

wound, and no earthly balm could cure it. Mr. Whitefield was gone down the River Thames for Georgia, but on account of the embargo he returned to London. A young person, hearing of my distress, said she was going to hear Mr. Whitefield, and would be glad of my company. Accordingly, I went with her, and before we reached the place we heard the people singing hymns. When Mr. Whitefield stood up I was struck with his appearance; I thought there was something in his face I never saw in any human face before. His text was, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' He enlarged on the new birth, but I understood him not, and wondered what

it was to be born again. My distress grew very heavy, nor was there one to whom I could open my mind. One day, however, as I was reading the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, I was filled with light and love. I saw my lost estate in Adam and my recovery by Christ Jesus. I was as sensible when the guilt of sin was taken off my conscience as a man is sensible when a load is removed from his shoulders. Now, therefore, God having set my soul at liberty, he opened my lips to praise him, and all the flow of spirits which I had felt in the vanities of the world was directed toward God. Now, all my former companions forsook me, and said they could not bear my melancholy conversation; and my sister told me she

now hated to see me in company, I looked so like a fool. But, for my dear Lord's sake — blessed be his name!—this was my glory.”

About this time, her sea-faring husband returned, and, seeing the change in her, said she had gone mad, and proposed to her—being encouraged by her sister to do so—to put her into a mad-house. She answered, “I am in my perfect senses, but you may do with my body as God pleases to allow you.” He said, again, “You shall forsake these Methodists, or I will put you into a mad-house.” She answered: “I believe them to be the people of God; therefore, if I deny them I should deny the Lord, who bought me with his blood. Put me into whatever place you please: the

210 HEROINES OF METHODISM.

Lord will go with me." On this he went out to bespeak for her a place in the mad-house. While he was gone she poured out her sorrows before God, and entreated him either to prevent this or overrule it for his glory; but her husband had not been gone long when, even while she was at prayer, he returned, saying, "I cannot do it." From her distress and excitement she became dangerously ill; in a little time, however, it pleased God to restore her, when Mr. Murray gave her leave to attend preaching, which, she says, "was health to my bones." In the next voyage which her husband made he died at sea. Then came to her a season of spiritual darkness, of darkness and unbelief. She represents

her conflicts with the adversary of her soul as terrible indeed. God was trying and proving her, in order to fit her for the great work he had laid out for her to perform. She had to win many souls for him; day in and day out she must toil in his vineyard, never tiring, never fainting, but always abounding in the work of the Lord.

A widow, and childless—as was Lady Maxwell, but not like her a wealthy dowager—Mrs. Murray could not, as did she in the dignified seclusion of home, send out her benevolent agents and her charities all over the land. Work for her Lord, however, she must all the time; but it needs must be by personal efforts alone: so she set herself to her life-

task, unmindful of its cost of danger, exposure, or fatigue. As discreet as zealous, Mr. Wesley employed her as directress of his homes and hospitals, and also appointed her to the duty of visiting and organizing the female classes in the north of England. When engaged in this latter work, it often necessitated her itinerating on horseback, and frequently without any protector or companion on her travels. An old man told Dr. Bunting that one day he saw her come forth to the door of a house to take her departure for some of her mission-work. A servant brought round her steed; she gave a glance, to see that all was right, then laid her hand on her horse's shoulder: the well-trained animal immediately knelt down. The

lady, who suffered no one to help her in mounting, seated herself lightly on the saddle, and, as in an instant she was out of sight, the old man saw her no more, except in dreams. Young, beautiful, well educated, and accomplished, with rare and most winning attractions of person, manner, head, and heart, was it any marvel that another man also saw her in his dreams? Yes, this was the woman—richly endowed by nature, culture, and grace, the one “every way worthy of him”—who made the love-dream of John Wesley. Henceforth we note running through his web of life the small silken thread of romance; henceforth along his life’s pathway comes the fragrance of a flower that in its sweetness and

214 HEROINES OF METHODISM.

beauty he had once stopped a little while to admire and then pass on his way through life, with only the ashes of a precious memory deposited deep down in his heart of hearts ; for from

This kindred spirit found,
By Heaven intrusted to his care,
The daughter of his faith and prayer,

he was destined to be ruthlessly and forever parted. There is some undivulged mystery about the sudden rupture of his engagement with Grace Murray ; at least, to this day its solution has never been made entirely satisfactory and clear to us by any of his biographers. He speaks of her in some stanzas, which never saw the light till they were both in heaven, as

The friend, than life more dear,

who was,

In one luckless, baleful hour,
Torn from his inly-bleeding heart.

But his God in this, as in his many
life-trials, was his succor and support.
In the last stanza of the poem alluded to he thus invokes the aid of
Him, his covenant-keeping God:

Teach me from every pleasing snare
To keep the issues of my heart;
Be thou my love, my joy, my fear,
Thou my eternal portion art.

It was deemed that Whitefield and Charles Wesley had somewhat to do with so abruptly severing the bonds which bound John Wesley to Grace Murray, because they might have supposed the ties of domestic life would interfere with the higher duties of his great work. So they hur-

riedly secured her marriage to the Rev. Mr. Bennet; but how she allowed herself to be a party to such a transaction we cannot tell, but may surmise that it was in order to satisfy some claims he might have supposed he had, which her extreme conscientiousness would not suffer her to disallow. However, that she made this hastily-gotten-up husband a most dutiful and affectionate wife there is no question. He was a very pious, excellent man, and a highly esteemed minister in Mr. Wesley's Connection at the time she became his wife, but from some difference of doctrine, springing up between Mr. Wesley and himself, he separated from him and joined Whitefield, embracing the latter's Calvinistic views. His wife,

though deeply afflicted at this, *wife-like*, sided with her husband, as also when he changed again and became “a dissenting minister.” The cares of a growing family—for she became the mother of five sons—precluded her accompanying her husband and assisting him in his ministrations “round the circuit.” His health becoming feeble and her valuable assistance not always, as formerly, at hand were the reasons, it is alleged, for his giving up the itinerancy for a settled pastorate. No doubt it was very comfortable and convenient, when exhausted with his official labors, to say, “Grace Bennet, give out that hymn,” or, “Grace Bennet, lead that class,” or, “Offer the closing prayer;” and when she became disabled from

218 HEROINES OF METHODISM.

serving thus as his helpmeet he succumbed to circumstances and traveled no more.

In the olden time, when the laborers were fewer, it was no uncommon thing for the women-helpers to publicly officiate in many clerical duties; and I myself recollect hearing, when quite a child, a Methodist minister from the pulpit give the command to his wife in the congregation, thus: "Elizabeth Sneed, lead in prayer!" "George Eliot," *alias* Mrs. Lewes, in "Adam Bede," has invested with the witchery of romance one of these women-helpers in the Lord, and the saintly "Dinah Morris's" fervent ministrations go to the heart of the reader with irresistible power and pathos. While the call for woman's

help in public becomes less urgent, in private it is more so ; but, though she must sow the seed of the gospel by all waters, grateful should she be that it is seldom, if ever, required of her *now* to go out of her own sphere or circle, or overstep the modesty of her nature or sex in any wise, in order to further on the work of the Lord, while still willing to go or stay, speak or be silent, as God commands.

After Mr. Bennet's death his widow sought retirement as most congenial, and most proper in her circumstances, giving herself to the religious training and education of her sons. That one of these became a minister we learn from it being related to us that his mother had gone to pay a

visit to him where he was officiating at the time as a minister. On the death of her husband, Mrs. Bennet again united with the people of her early choice, the Wesleyan Methodists, and was for many years a class-leader among them. Her services in that capacity must have been invaluable, with her varied and ripe experience, her wisdom, her sweetness, her serenity, her sanctity. In her diary—for, like all the early Methodists, she kept one—she alludes to her class, thus: “Last night my little company met. My heart was enlarged as I endeavored to show them in what manner I believe Christ to be the sinner’s hope of salvation.”

The early Methodists, like the Romanists, had their “matins.” It was

their custom to assemble very early in the morning for praise and prayer. Mrs. Bennet, in allusion to this, remarks: "It was our prayer-meeting this morning. The maid begged me not to get up, being so poorly, but I durst not make it an excuse. I rose, weak as I was, and would not for the world have lain in my bed. My soul was doubly blessed. The Lord was with us in truth, and I believe not one soul went empty away. How I should have regretted, and my heart have smote me, if I had lain in bed, when I consider how my dear Lord stayed whole nights on the mount, exposed to the open air! O I hate excuses, both in myself and others!" In another entry in her diary she says: "I have been in the school of

Christ nearly sixty years, and the nearer I approach to eternity the more I see my need of a complete Saviour. O how I admire the glorious plan of redemption through the Son of God! O Lord Jesus, I would lie in the dust before thee!" Again, she writes: "I am now nearly eighty-five years old, a wonder to myself and to many; but why should we wonder? Is it not God who gave me life? and has he not a right to continue it as long as it will be for his glory? 'For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.' Yet I do not choose; His will is best. Then, help me, Lord, to wait my appointed time, till my change comes! Sometimes I have pleasing thoughts that some of my old companions will come

to meet me and welcome me home. But my eyes forbid me saying any more." So she still saw to write. How graciously her faculties were preserved! But soon after this, from increasing failure of sight, she writes no more; and yet, after almost entire loss of vision from extreme old age, frequently did she bless God for having inclined her heart, in her youth, to delight in reading his word, thereby storing her memory with blessed passages of Scripture—the joy and comfort of her old age. At her very advanced age, long after her four-score, she was still found instructing her class and comforting mourners in Zion. Yes, she was found still, "in age and feebleness extreme," zealously as ever, at work for her

224 HEROINES OF METHODISM.

Lord and Master, when, at last, by faith she heard his joyful summons, "It is enough ; now, come up higher." About midnight came the call ; she responded to it with these triumphant words : "Glory be to thee, my God ! Peace thou givest me."





[illegible]

GTU Library



3 2400 00673 4283

